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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1344th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 November 2021

**On the deteriorating situation in Ukraine and the continued non-implementation by the
Ukrainian authorities of the Minsk agreements**

Madam Chairperson,

There remains a dangerous impasse in the process for settling the crisis in Ukraine. This is because of the Ukrainian Government's refusal to implement in good faith the provisions of the Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, which was endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202.

The Minsk agreements, which are the sole internationally recognized framework for a settlement and to which there is no alternative, are regularly and systematically challenged by the representatives of the Ukrainian authorities. Those opposed to their strict implementation continue to be appointed to key government posts, while supporters of the Minsk agreements are excluded from the settlement process. One need only recall the telling dismissals last year of Vitold Fokin, first deputy head of the Ukrainian delegation to the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), or Serhii Syvokho, an adviser to the Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine. They both lost their posts after having advocated dialogue with the authorities in Donbas on the basis of the Package of Measures.

There were new appointments in Kyiv last week – former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Reintegration Oleksii Reznikov became Minister of Defence of Ukraine on 4 November. Iryna Vereshchuk replaced him as the minister responsible for reintegration issues. Their first public appearances in their new capacity, in which they outlined President Zelenskyy's strategy, make it clear that the Ukrainian Government does not take the Minsk process seriously.

In particular, on 5 November, Mr. Reznikov announced on Ukrainian television that the current political team had "inherited" the Minsk agreements and that they were "not a springboard for peace". He emphasized that "no one would sit at the table" with the current representatives of Donbas, whom the Ukrainian Government regards as "terrorists and mercenaries". Moreover, this advocate of revising the Minsk agreements reiterated that "new formats and new alliances" should be sought. It appears that the Ukrainian Government is in no way inclined to work constructively within the existing formats. There is a clear attempt to "start from scratch" so as not to have to implement what has already been agreed upon and worked out.

The attitude of the Ukrainian authorities was also confirmed by the words of Ms. Vereshchuk during her policy statement on 8 November on the Ukrainian television channel Dom. She stated that “political decisions” were not worked out within the framework of the Minsk process. Of course, she failed to mention that one of the key instructions issued by the “Normandy format” summit of 9 December 2019 to the TCG, as part of the measures to implement the political provisions of the Minsk agreements, was the task of reaching agreement within the TCG on all legal aspects of a special status for Donbas – as outlined in the Package of Measures. That is, in consultation with and upon agreement by representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Furthermore, showing public ignorance of whose signatures are on the Minsk agreements, she saw fit to make sweeping accusations of their non-implementation by just about anyone, but not by those who are actually stalling the peace process. Finally, succumbing to flights of fancy and adopting the style of political slogans spouted by certain prominent figures from the first half and middle of the twentieth century, she referred to the conflict in eastern Ukraine as “a war of the European continent and civilization”, in which “the right to be called human beings in the twenty-first century” was at stake. In addition, she provided her vision of the role of the United States of America, which she described as “a superstate” that had helped to “bring Ukraine out of the twilight of uncertainty”. And all this set against ruminations about Ukraine’s independence.

Most noteworthy in what the newly appointed ministers had to say is the key underlying message – as instructed by its Western handlers, the Ukrainian Government is refusing to engage in dialogue with the representatives of Donbas. The current patrons of the authorities in Kyiv are encouraging the Ukrainian Government to reject such dialogue and fostering the fallacy that the “Donbas problem” needs to be resolved with Russia alone, which, incidentally, has no obligations under the Minsk agreements. It is not surprising that, in these circumstances, the work of the TCG is blocked. Dialogue with the representatives of Donbas in accordance with the letter of the Minsk agreements is needed for progress to be made there. The latest meetings of the TCG and its working groups on 9 and 10 November concluded once again without any results.

Against this backdrop, tensions persist at the line of contact. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) has observed an increase in the use of large-calibre weapons since late October. Strangely enough, this coincided with the transportation of such weapons by rail being stepped up by the Ukrainian armed forces, as identified by the SMM during the same period. The Mission has again recorded the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) by the Ukrainian armed forces in violation of the ceasefire-strengthening measures of 22 July 2020. For example, the Mission’s weekly report dated 9 November includes a photo of a Ukrainian armed forces’ Leleka-100 reconnaissance UAV in operation near the line of contact.

Over in Kyiv, they continue to discredit the efforts to monitor and co-ordinate the ceasefire. They dismiss the task of properly launching a co-ordination mechanism for responding to ceasefire violations through the facilitation of the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC) in its current setting. The fate of Andrey Kosyak, the Luhansk representative to the JCCC who was kidnapped by the Ukrainian military on 13 October in the disengagement area near Zolote and is still being held by the Ukrainian Government, is not clear. Lawyers and other representatives are not allowed to see him.

The situation on the ground has grown noticeably worse since the Ukrainian armed forces’ offensive operations on 25–26 October in the area of Staromarivka in the security zone between the sides’ forward positions. At the Permanent Council meeting on 28 October, Ukraine’s representatives to the OSCE attempted to misinform the international community by claiming that the Ukrainian armed forces had not

changed their positions and had not been involved in the seizure of Staromarivka ascribed to them. However, the facts subsequently cited by the SMM and public revelations by Ukrainian officials confirmed that this was not the case – the Ukrainian armed forces had carried out offensive operations in the area. This has led to an increase in local tensions and to new casualties and further destruction.

By undermining the ceasefire with armed provocations, frustrating the ability to monitor the ceasefire, disavowing the mechanism for providing security guarantees, refusing to engage in dialogue with the representatives of Donbas in the TCG on a political settlement and declaring that the Minsk agreements are irrelevant, the Ukrainian Government is deliberately demonstrating that it has no peace plan whatsoever for Donbas. The country's leaders are guided exclusively by a paradigm of force when considering further steps in eastern Ukraine. This is also evidenced by the legislative amendments being introduced, including the promotion of the concept of a "transition period". The Ukrainian Government intends to consolidate its withdrawal from the Minsk agreements through the adoption of legislation on this concept.

We have taken note of the lack of a reaction on the part of the OSCE and the "Normandy format" co-sponsors of the Minsk agreements to such destructive actions by the Ukrainian Government. It is clear that this silence is perceived in Ukraine as an endorsement of the course of dismantling the Minsk process and evading direct dialogue with the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk – dialogue stipulated by the provisions of United Nations Security Council resolution 2202.

We are concerned about the incidents that have occurred in recent weeks close to SMM patrols in the Luhansk region. The shooting in Khriashchuvate on 1 November, and the opening of fire by Ukrainian soldiers and the explosion near a Mission vehicle in Bolotene on 6 November were serious security incidents for the monitors.

In addition, we note the SMM's task under paragraph 3 of its mandate, namely to establish and develop contacts with the authorities on the ground on both sides of the line of contact to ensure the uninterrupted work of the monitors and their safe and secure access. So far, we are seeing insufficient efforts by the Mission to develop such dialogue in certain areas of Donbas.

In closing, we are compelled once again to draw attention to the problem of aggressive nationalism, neo-Nazism and xenophobia in Ukraine. Not so long ago, the notorious Myrotvorets website, which publishes the personal details of journalists and public figures who are not to the liking of the Ukrainian nationalists, added information about Faina Savenkova, a 12-year-old Luhansk girl, to its blacklist. This girl, who has found a calling in poetry and literature, is now in danger, since the details of people whom the Ukrainian nationalists consider to be "enemies of Ukraine" are posted on the aforementioned website. They claim she is "disseminating false information" and "participating in anti-Ukrainian propaganda events".

We would remind you that Myrotvorets operates with the support of the Ukrainian intelligence services and from servers located in the United States. Some of those people whose details were listed on the website have already been killed. How could a child possibly be included in that database? In the meantime, Ms. Savenkova has appealed to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for protection. UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore said that the girl, like other children, had a legitimate right to express her views and to be protected from any forms of attack or harassment when doing so. However, her details are still to be found on the Myrotvorets website today.

We call upon Ukraine's external handlers and the relevant OSCE institutions to facilitate, not in words but in practice, compliance by the authorities of that country with its obligations under international law, including its OSCE commitments. Encouraging disregard for the implementation of these and abetting

the sabotaging of the Package of Measures undermine the prospects for a sustainable resolution of the internal Ukrainian crisis.

Thank you for your attention.