

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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AT THE 1191st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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**On the situation in Ukraine and the need to implement
the Minsk agreements**

Mr. Chairperson,

The “harvest ceasefire” agreed to in the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine (TCG) on 27 June provided a new opportunity for a peaceful settlement of the internal Ukrainian civil conflict. The total number of ceasefire violations has decreased but the Ukrainian armed forces continue to shell Horlivka, Debaltseve and Donetsk and to move into the “grey zones”. On 1 July, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) confirmed that the security forces had taken the settlement of Zolote-4. The SMM monitors spotted two armoured personnel carriers and soldiers on the territory of an administrative building. All of this undermines the peace efforts.

The Ukrainian authorities’ adventurist determination to reintegrate the Donbas republics by force is resulting in new civilian casualties among the local population. According to the SMM, from 20 June to 3 July, two civilians in Yasynuvata and Dokuchaievsk were injured as a result of shelling from Ukrainian armed forces’ positions, and homes were damaged in Kominternove, Dokuchaievsk and Zolote-5. Dokuchaievsk was shelled after the “harvest ceasefire” came into force on the evening of 1 July. Eighteen civilians have been killed so far in 2018 in militia-controlled territory and 91 people have been wounded. Each new victim only brings closer the “point of no return” for restoring peace in Ukraine.

We need a swift return to implementation of the Framework Decision on Disengagement of Forces and Hardware of 2016. Disengagement must be completed in the three pilot areas of Petrivske, Zolote and Stanytsia Luhanska and work must begin on reaching agreement on new disengagement areas. The Ukrainian security forces remain present inside the disengagement areas of Zolote and Petrivske and refuse to implement the agreement in Stanytsia Luhanska.

Effective measures to de-escalate the situation in the problem areas along the line of contact would make it possible to resume the withdrawal of heavy weapons. For now, the

situation remains volatile. The Ukrainian armed forces are massing military equipment. Between 20 June and 3 July, the SMM spotted 78 pieces of Ukrainian armed forces' weaponry in violation of the Minsk Package of Measures, 101 pieces of equipment beyond the withdrawal lines, extensive minefields in Nelipivka and Lebedynske, and 431 pieces of weaponry missing from the Ukrainian security forces' storage depots. The real situation could be even worse. At the briefing in Vienna on 4 July, the Principal Deputy Chief Monitor of the SMM, Alexander Hug, presented a map of the flights by the SMM long-range unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which shows that monitoring is being conducted primarily over militia-controlled territory. We hope that the SMM will act promptly to correct this disparity, which negatively affects the objectivity of monitoring military equipment violating the Minsk Package of Measures.

External forces that claim a mediator role in the settlement process are only fuelling the militarist and revanchist mood in the Ukrainian Government. The United States of America has already sold Javelin anti-tank missile systems to Ukraine and has now begun supplying heavy machine guns. Under a bilateral US-Ukrainian agreement, a plant belonging to Ukroboronprom is preparing to start assembling combat modules for installation on light-armoured hardware. The United States bears direct responsibility for the consequences of these extremely ill-considered steps.

The Ukrainian Government's unwillingness to fulfil its obligations under the Minsk Package of Measures in good faith is preventing the SMM from carrying out its mandate. We condemn any intimidation and threats against the SMM monitors. Those responsible on both sides must be punished. The Principal Deputy Chief Monitor said that restrictions of monitors' freedom of movement are taking place equally on both sides of the line of contact. In Ukrainian armed forces-controlled territory, entire areas in Zolote, Stanytsia Luhanska, Shchastia and Popasna have been closed to the SMM on the pretext of mine hazards. Last week, the Ukrainian armed forces jammed SMM UAVs on four occasions near Bohdanivka and Popasna and prevented the launch of a UAV at Komar. On 2 July, the SMM discovered that a cable had been attached to its observation camera at Shyrokyne leading to a Ukrainian armed forces' facility located close by. This indicates that the security forces could be using SMM information for military purposes.

At the briefing in Vienna on 28 June, the co-ordinator of the TCG political working group, Pierre Morel, essentially confirmed that the Ukrainian Government is sabotaging the political commitments it has undertaken. The Ukrainian Government's representatives openly challenge the concept of synchronized political steps approved by the Normandy Quartet Heads of State (including the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko) at the Berlin summit in October 2016. The Ukrainian authorities still refuse to engage in direct dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk, which, at the Ukrainian Government's insistence, signed the Minsk agreements.

The Ukrainian authorities are blocking the compromise "Steinmeier formula" regarding the law on a special status for Donbas and are preventing the entry into force of a law on amnesty in accordance with point 5 of the Minsk Package of Measures. Work on amendments to Ukraine's Constitution to guarantee the rights of the people of Donbas has been postponed indefinitely.

The Ukrainian Government is deliberately causing even more serious humanitarian problems in Donbas. It is obstructing an exchange of prisoners and detained persons based on

the principle of “all for all”. Ukraine’s negotiators, Viktor Medvedchuk and Iryna Herashchenko, were again absent from the TCG meeting on 27 June. The Ukrainian Government’s representatives are using artificial pretexts not to agree on a statement prohibiting the use of torture.

The Ukrainian authorities are blocking the repair of the bridge at Stanytsia Luhanska, which is the lifeline for people in certain areas of the Luhansk region. The Ukrainian Government’s absurd demands regarding the maximum width of the road, which would make it impossible for ambulances to use the bridge, renders this important humanitarian initiative all but meaningless.

A strict checkpoint crossing regime remains in place along the line of contact. People are dying in the queues that form at the checkpoints. On 27 June, the SMM reported that a man died of a heart attack at the Ukrainian entry-exit checkpoint at Maiorsk. Efforts continue to tighten the blockade of Donbas.

We oppose the Ukrainian Government’s policy of suppressing dissent in eastern Ukraine. We continue to support the people of Donbas with food and other staples. The most recent humanitarian convoy entered the region on 28 June through the checkpoints at Donetsk and Matveyev Kurgan. The OSCE Secretariat, the group of observers at the Gukovo and Donetsk checkpoints and the SMM heads were informed in advance of the convoy’s entry date and the contents transported. As in the past, the Ukrainian customs officers and border guards were able to inspect the cargo together with their Russian colleagues. This was confirmed by the OSCE monitors.

We call on Western countries to put pressure on the Ukrainian Government to ensure strict compliance with its obligations under the Minsk Package of Measures. References to a mythical “Russian aggression” or the increasingly complicated internal political situation in Ukraine will end up freezing the problem for the foreseeable future. No one in Russia has any interest in such a development.

This situation would only be likely to cause a new spiral of instability in Ukraine. Worrying signals are coming from the Ukrainian Government. We are constantly calling attention to Ukrainian politicians’ indulgence of and even convergence with radical nationalists. The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has also drawn attention to this issue, as have Amnesty International, Front Line Defenders, Human Rights Watch, Freedom House and even the Atlantic Council. In late June, the Atlantic Council website published an article titled “Ukraine’s Got a Real Problem with Far-Right Violence”, which examined the growing problem of the rise of radical nationalism in Ukraine. Our signals have not been heeded in time. On 23 June, a group of neo-Nazi-style thugs carried out yet another attack on a Roma camp in Lviv. One man was killed and four people were injured, including a woman and a ten-year-old child. On 2 July in Berehove in the Zakarpattia region, where demonstrations against racism had only just taken place the previous day, another member of the Roma community was killed. In Kharkiv, radicals organized a picket, at which they loudly proclaimed that they would attack gypsies.

The atmosphere of hostility that the Ukrainian Government has cultivated takes the most horrific forms. The Ukrainian information agency Unian reported that local radicals attacked a man who had resettled from Donbas in the Sumy region. They tore his mouth open and threw him under the wheels of a car just for speaking Russian.

Unfortunately, our OSCE colleagues continue to remain silent on the issue of rampant radical nationalism in Ukraine. More than four years have now passed since the mass shootings on Independence Square in February 2014. Those responsible have still not been found and punished. Despite the attention that international organizations have given this tragedy, the process is still clearly being held up.

The provisions on language in Ukraine's Law on Education lay the foundations for isolating the Russian-speaking population and members of the Hungarian, Romanian, Slovakian, Polish, Roma and Ruthenian minorities. Denying historical traditions and touting Nazi collaborators as national heroes will split Ukraine along moral and ideological lines. Politicians in Kyiv are openly interfering in religious affairs and encouraging religious divisions in Ukraine. How, in such a situation, can the Ukrainian authorities win the sympathy of the people of Donbas?

Those who oppose the policies of the "Maidan" authorities in Ukraine are inevitably suppressed. The Ukrainian Government is particularly intolerant of independent journalism. According to the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, there have been 21 attacks on the media in 2018 and 71 cases of restrictions on freedom of speech in Ukraine. On 26 June, the Ukrainian authorities deported from the country and imposed a five-year entry ban on journalists working for the Russian media Yevgeny Primakov (VGTRK) and Paula Slier (Russia Today), who had come to Ukraine to attend a conference on media freedom and pluralism. The journalist Kirill Vyshinsky remains in custody for his professional activity.

In conclusion, we repeat that for the Ukrainian Government the Minsk Package of Measures should and could become not a capitulation but the key to restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity. We believe that only full implementation in good faith by the Ukrainian Government of the road map will prevent the emergence of new hotbeds of confrontation in Ukraine.

Thank you for your attention.