

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1174th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 February 2018

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The Ukrainian Government, backed by its sponsors abroad, continues to dig the Minsk agreements' grave.

The Verkhovna Rada has passed the law on the "reintegration" of Donbas, which directly contradicts the Minsk agreements. Ukrainian officials' statements to the contrary fail to convince. In particular, in accordance with Article 2 of the law, "all persons involved in the aggression and in the work of the occupation administrations are subject to criminal prosecution." Under Point 5 of the Minsk Package of Measures, the Ukrainian Government has an obligation to ensure "pardon and amnesty by enacting the law prohibiting the prosecution and punishment of persons in connection with the events that took place in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine."

Passing this kind of legislation is yet another unilateral measure that runs contrary to the Ukrainian Government's commitments. This comes in addition to the distorted law on special status, the trade and transport blockade, cutting off mobile telecommunications and Internet services and the Ukrainian Government's refusal to fulfil its social commitments towards its own citizens.

If the Ukrainian lawmakers wanted to comply with the Minsk agreements, the directions they should take are set out in the Package of Measures, in particular in Point 11. This includes the "right to linguistic self-determination", establishing people's police units and so on.

Today, the Ukrainian Government is doing the opposite and continues to elaborate discriminatory legislation on education – secondary education now – infringing the rights of the Russian-speaking population and national minorities to receive education in their own language. A discriminatory law on citizenship is currently in preparation.

This is taking place against a backdrop of systematic pressure on freedom of speech and persecution of journalists. The latest example is Igor Guzhva, chief editor of the Internet publication Strana.ua, who has fled Ukraine and sought asylum here in Austria.

The last meeting of the Contact Group on Ukraine on 31 January shows that the Ukrainian Government is evading discussion of issues of fundamental importance – entry into force of the law on special status for certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and agreeing on the modalities for local elections.

The Ukrainian Government's failure to respect the agreements on lists of persons to be exchanged, on which agreement was reached in the Contact Group, is delaying the release and exchange process.

Orders for the Ukrainian armed forces to respect the ceasefire regime have still not been published and implemented, despite repeated calls from the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), Ertuğrul Apakan, and the agreements reached in the Contact Group. The SMM has recorded continued indiscriminate shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces of populated areas under militia control. Four civilians were injured and two apartment blocks damaged during this shelling in Dokuchaievsk last week, on 22 January, and four houses were damaged in Sakhanka on 24 January.

It is typical that the Ukrainian representatives in the Contact Group refused the invitation to conduct an investigation on the ground into the circumstances of the shelling of a bus near Olenivka on 21 January.

The OSCE monitors note that the Ukrainian armed forces have intensified their military activity. Between 22 and 28 January, in violation of the Minsk agreements, 12 artillery pieces were detected in Sievierodonetsk, 4 pieces in Mariupol, 4 howitzers in Karlivka and an anti-aircraft system in Kalynove. The monitors spotted 89 pieces of Ukrainian armed forces' weaponry just beyond the withdrawal lines, including 22 multiple-launch rocket systems. Within the limits of populated areas, 11 howitzers were seen in Novoolenivka and 5 anti-aircraft systems in Spirne.

Special Monitoring Mission statistics show that the majority of restrictions on the SMM's work occur on territory under Ukrainian armed forces' control under the pretext of mine hazards. There are also cases of direct obstruction, such as the shooting at an SMM unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) in Pavlopil on 12 January and the refusal of entry to an ammunition storage depot on 26 January.

Sabotage of the disengagement process in Stanytsia Luhanska continues. The SMM monitors have recorded no ceasefire violations along this stretch since 25 December last year. The militia have repeatedly declared their readiness to begin disengagement.

Local ceasefires in order to carry out repair and reconstruction work are still essential. The SMM has every opportunity for establishing closer contacts with militia officials. We recall that militia officials were part of the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC) in 2015 and should again be allowed to take part in this mechanism's work.

For Russia to renew its participation in the JCCC, rules for its work, giving clear legal status to its staff, must be drafted and approved. JCCC personnel need normal working

conditions that are no worse than those of the SMM monitors. Normal procedures for their entry into and exit from Ukraine should also be in place. Of course, there can be no question of Russian military personnel working in Ukraine as representatives of the “aggressor country”.

Mr. Chairperson,

We see the statements by Ukrainian and United States representatives about the “initiator” of the conflict as an attempt to shift the blame from themselves and present a false reality.

It was not Russia that cooked up the bloody brew on the Maidan in Kyiv. The governments in Kyiv and Washington are well aware of this. It was not Russia that fed and nurtured nationalist groups. It was the Ukrainian Government that unleashed the punitive operation against the people of Donbas in April 2014, acting on instructions from its overseas sponsors and with their full support. The mass burning alive of people in Odessa on 2 May 2014 is also on the conscience of those who indulged and encouraged radical Ukrainian nationalism.

According to statistics from human rights ombudsmen in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, 5,872 civilians, including 109 children, have died in Donbas alone since the conflict began. Most of these deaths occurred in 2014 and 2015 and were caused by artillery and airstrikes against populated areas.

We remember full well who handed out sandwiches and biscuits on the Maidan, who paid for the nationalists’ demonstrations, and who stands behind the current government in power in Ukraine.

A few days ago, former US Vice President Joe Biden related how he put effective pressure on the Ukrainian Government in April 2016. He spent six hours getting Prosecutor General Viktor Shokin, who he found undesirable, removed from his post, threatening to refuse a loan worth one billion US dollars if this was not done. In his memoirs published in November 2017, Joe Biden admits that at the height of the riots, he pressured Viktor Yanukovich, the legitimate President of Ukraine, to step down from his post. More and more such revelations will emerge. The main thing is to draw the right conclusions from this information.

The “keys” to resolving the conflict peacefully are in Washington and Kyiv. We see that our US colleagues have ample leverage over Ukraine’s political leadership. What is lacking is the political will.

On a practical level, it is essential to remove the destabilizing factor of the radical Ukrainian nationalists, who fiercely oppose the Minsk agreements. The nationalists reject the principle of the rule of law, dictate their conditions to the courts and local government bodies, pursue a policy of glorifying Nazism and distorting history, and carry out attacks on churches and dissidents. The national militia established in Ukraine is an openly neo-Nazi group.

On 8 January, 30 extremists from the organization C14 blocked entry to the grounds of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra and shouted anti-Russian and anti-religious slogans. They continue to persecute members of the clergy.

On 29 January, radicals in Dnipro disrupted a concert marking the anniversary of the lifting of the siege of Leningrad. Veterans of the Great Patriotic War and children who had come to congratulate them were trapped inside the concert hall. This is who the nationalists are fighting.

In conclusion, we recall that implementing the Minsk agreements through direct dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk does not mean capitulation for Ukraine. On the contrary, this is a chance for genuine national harmony, restoring good-neighbourly relations, and preserving Ukraine's territorial integrity within its current borders.

Thank you for your attention.