

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY RUDENKO,
DIRECTOR OF THE SECOND CIS DEPARTMENT OF THE
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
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**Ensuring security and stability in the OSCE region in light of
developments with respect to Ukraine**

Distinguished colleagues,

The Ukrainian crisis has been going on for over two years. I think that we can already assess its consequences for European security now.

On the one hand, the main co-operation mechanisms, which with some degree of effectiveness used to make it possible to control the security situation, have been undermined. Dividing lines, against which we have fought together, including here in the OSCE, are becoming entrenched once again, more rapidly in the politico-military sphere than anywhere else. Sanctions have seriously harmed economic co-operation, which served as a kind of “safety net” for relations between East and West. The logic of confrontation has poisoned inter-parliamentary dialogue.

On the other hand, the crisis has freed us from our illusions. The fact is that earlier – beginning with the events in the former Yugoslavia – we repeatedly appealed to the principles of non-interference in internal affairs, non-use of force, and respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty. Our appeals were ignored by the very same countries that are now so actively calling on Russia “to resume compliance with those principles”. “Business as usual” is no longer acceptable to anybody, nor will it be any more. A new reality has emerged, to which we will have to adapt ourselves. A new framework for relations is required, which would take account of the lessons of the Ukrainian crisis and effectively prevent a repeat of what has happened. In that connection, it is not a question of changing the key principles of international law and the OSCE, but of guarantees for their uniform understanding by all and their uniform application.

Settlement of the Ukrainian crisis is not only about the possibility of putting an end to the fratricidal civil war in that country, but also about the opportunity to start serious work on rebuilding a stronger system of regional security, taking into account the interests of all

players. The two tasks can be dealt with in parallel. Progress in one of these areas will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the other.

Two conflicting approaches to the settlement of the Ukrainian crisis can be observed in the statements made by the speakers before me. One is the need to step up efforts to find solutions that are mutually acceptable to the parties to the conflict. The second is to increase pressure on Russia so that it forces one of the parties to in fact abandon the Minsk agreements and surrender itself to the mercy of the authorities in Kyiv.

After two years, it is becoming increasingly evident that power games with Russia are futile. This is not the first time that we find ourselves in such a situation and it is not the first time that history has proved that the language of ultimatums and threats does not work with us. Agreement can be reached with Russia only through honest and mutually respectful dialogue. Those who understand this have long been doing so without propaganda, mantras and hysterics.

In spite of the different view of the causes and consequences of the crisis, there is one thing that unites us all, namely the fact that the crisis can be resolved only by peaceful means on the basis of the Minsk Package of Measures, which involves restoring the sovereignty of present-day Ukraine while ensuring constitutional guarantees for the special status of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

It is understood that security cannot be ensured without progress in the political sphere and vice versa. The solution must be comprehensive, and the political process must occur in parallel with steps to strengthen security. And all this must take place through direct dialogue between the parties. This is the basic philosophy of the Package of Measures.

There are a number of key problems that the parties are currently trying to resolve within the framework of various international platforms – in the Trilateral Contact Group, in the Normandy format and through bilateral dialogue with interested countries. I shall highlight the main ones.

In terms of security, the priority task is to put a stop to the shelling and establish a stable and sustainable ceasefire regime. So far it has not proved possible to establish a lasting full ceasefire regime. The reasons for this are poor control of the troops, compounded by the presence of so-called volunteer formations like Right Sector, Azov and Aidar in the conflict zone. Incidentally, reports by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) also mention this. It is costing us great energy to restrain the Donbas militias from tough retaliatory measures. Another problem is the fact that the parties' positions are moving dangerously close to one another, along with the "creeping" occupation of the "grey zone".

By and large, we support the SMM's proposals for de-escalation, which are currently being discussed intensively in the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. The next round of talks is scheduled for tomorrow and we look forward to the results. We propose beginning the process of disengagement of forces in several places immediately and creating several "pilot" demilitarized zones and then transferring this experience to the entire line of contact. This requires the active involvement of the military experts from the Trilateral Contact Group and the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC). Only SMM and JCCC personnel would be allowed in the demilitarized zones. We are ready to consider the question of arming SMM monitors in the conflict zone with standard-issue sidearms.

The attempts to destroy the JCCC, which, incidentally, was established at Ukraine's initiative, need to stop. This mechanism must be a truly joint one. Representatives of Ukraine (the Ukrainian Government and certain areas) and Russia should be present together in all the JCCC departments. If they are separated on different sides of the line of contact, the whole point of the JCCC disappears. If the JCCC is unable to function properly, there are no guarantees that the demilitarization will not turn out to be unilateral, as happened earlier in Shyrokyne.

Now for the political questions. The law on local elections is undoubtedly an important part of the political package, but it is not the most important one. The priority task is to ensure the adoption of amendments to the law on special status, first and foremost a mechanism for its entry into force following the "Steinmeier formula", and to remove its temporary nature. Before people go to the polls, they need to know what they are voting for and what status their region will be granted. Accordingly, the laws on special status and amnesty must be adopted before election day. If there is complete clarity on this matter, it would be much easier to reach agreement on the remaining differences regarding the law on elections and also to ensure their security. There are opportunities for compromise, and we are ready to work intensively and constructively in various formats.

In this connection, the progress achieved must not remain purely a theoretical exercise, but should be transformed by the Verkhovna Rada into specific laws – in the form in which they were agreed upon with Donetsk and Luhansk in the Trilateral Contact Group. Let me repeat: Russia cannot do this for Ukraine. It is not the State Duma that discusses and adopts these laws, but the Verkhovna Rada.

Let me now turn to economic and humanitarian issues. The inadmissibility of the Donbas blockade was not spelled out in Minsk. It was deemed that paragraph 8 on full resumption of socio-economic ties, including social transfers such as pension payments and other payments, covered this. Unfortunately, practically nothing has been done in this regard. The blockade continues and the most vulnerable population groups suffer.

For our part, we are doing everything possible to alleviate the situation of the civilian population. Humanitarian convoys deliver food, medicines, essential goods, generators and building materials. I would remind you that we notify Ukraine and the International Committee of the Red Cross in advance of all these convoys, and Ukrainian border guards at the Donetsk checkpoint have an opportunity to inspect them if they so wish.

In conclusion, let me add a few words about the continuing insinuations regarding so-called "Russian aggression".

An analysis of the entire system of relations between Russia and Ukraine – at the level of contacts between people and businesses – reveals that the statements by the Ukrainian Government by no means reflect the position of the entire Ukrainian people. Radical nationalists are probably one of the most active and motivated segments of society, but they alone do not speak for the Ukrainian people.

I should like to provide just a few facts demonstrating the particular features of the relations between the imagined "victim" of the aggression and the so-called "aggressor State". Around 1.5 million refugees from the conflict zone have sought refuge in Russia. I

would point out that this is considerably more than on the territory of the European Union. Furthermore, over 2.5 million Ukrainian citizens continue to work in Russia and freely transfer their earnings to their home country. This season alone, over 120,000 Ukrainians have visited Russian Crimea. Thousands of students from Ukrainian Government-controlled territory have travelled to the so-called “occupied territory” to attend Donetsk institutions of higher education. Russia provides fuel on credit for those Ukrainian nuclear power plants that can still be expected to operate reliably, and spent fuel is exported to our territory. Emergency power is provided to cover the deficit in the Ukrainian energy system. Russian banks operating in Ukraine continue to pay taxes into the Ukrainian budget.

To sum things up, there is every possibility of resolving the crisis. These opportunities just need to be taken.

Thank you for your attention.