

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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AT THE 1106th 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,

Our discussions at the meetings of the OSCE Permanent Council are useful only if they somehow help to implement the Minsk Package of Measures. Raising the level of aggressive rhetoric is of no help in this regard, nor are attempts to avoid implementing the Minsk commitments while playing the imagined “victim of aggression” card.

We are grateful to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) for its efforts. It can be seen from the SMM reports for the period from 13 to 20 June alone that around 80 per cent of the shelling recorded occurred in towns and villages in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the immediate vicinity of the line of contact. It is civilians who are suffering as a result of this.

On 13 June, the SMM reported the shelling of Kalynove from the west, in other words from positions held by the security forces, damage to a house in Staromykhailivka as a result of an artillery strike coming from the north-west – also coming from Ukrainian positions, as well as the destruction of a house in Horlivka as a result of firing from the west, where the Ukrainian armed forces are stationed. On 14 June, the monitors reported the destruction of houses in Donetsk as a result of artillery strikes from the directions where Ukrainian armed forces’ positions are located. The same report contains information on the serious injury of a local resident in Makiivka, the destruction of a house and damage to a gas pipeline and water supply system as a result of the shelling of that city. The monitors also reported the destruction of and damage to apartment buildings and houses in Horlivka, Kominternove and Kalynove as a result of artillery fire from the directions where the Ukrainian armed forces are stationed. On 15 June, the Mission provided information on artillery strikes from the west and north-west, in other words from Ukrainian armed forces’ positions, on a mine on the outskirts of Horlivka and on a checkpoint operated by the Luhansk People’s Republic in Stanytsia Luhanska through which civilians pass. The shelling of Staromykhailivka from the west and north-north-east, where Ukrainian positions are located, was reported on 17 June. The same report talks of the destruction of four houses and technical installations in Dokuchaievsk as a

result of an artillery strike from the south-west – also from positions held by the Ukrainian armed forces. In Holmivskyi the SMM reported damage to a house as a result of firing from the north – from Ukrainian armed forces' positions. On 18 June, the OSCE Mission reported the destruction of four houses in Dokuchaievsk as a result of an artillery strike from the west-south-west, where Ukrainian security forces are. The same report provides information on the shelling of Novooleksandrivka at the line of contact from the west, in other words from positions held by the Ukrainian armed forces. On 20 June, Sakhanka was shelled from the west and south-west, and Kominternove from the north-west. A house, gas pipeline and garage were damaged. A house completely burned down in Donetsk as a result of being hit by a shell from the north-east, where security forces are also stationed. On 21 June, the monitors reported the destruction of a two-storey house in Kominternove as a result of shelling from the west, in other words from positions held by the Ukrainian armed forces, and also an artillery strike on Vesela Hora from the north-north-west, where security forces are also stationed. Thus, the Ukrainian armed forces are shelling the civilians of Donbas on a daily basis. The SMM was able to establish that between 13 and 20 June there were at least 670 salvos fired in the territory of the Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic.

According to the information available, including from Ukrainian sources, a significant percentage of losses among the Ukrainian army can be put down to friendly fire, careless handling of weapons and the triggering of their own unmarked minefields.

Establishing a ceasefire regime and its subsequent stabilization are key tasks now. Then the parties' forces need be disengaged, demilitarized areas created and guarantees provided that withdrawn military equipment will not be returned to the security zone. It is important to ensure that the disengagement of the parties and demilitarization occur in strict accordance with the agreements, and not as it was done in Shyrokyne. For this to happen there need to be guarantees that once the forces are withdrawn these areas will not be recaptured.

We trust that the negotiations on these questions taking place in the Trilateral Contact Group's working group on security issues will enable real progress to be made. High-level efforts on the part of the member countries of the Normandy quartet should also help towards this outcome.

On a practical level, the Russian-Ukrainian Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC) will play a key role, as will the SMM monitors. Unfortunately, the Ukrainian side is in fact disrupting this important instrument. In particular, it is obstructing Russian military representatives, and the Ukrainian Government is demanding that they withdraw to the territory controlled by the militias. Absurd and unfounded accusations have been made against the deputy Russian representative to the JCCC Vladimir Cheban.

The aforementioned priority steps must remove the main causes of tension at the line of contact – shelling of towns and villages, capture of "grey zones" leading to the dangerously converging forward positions, things "going missing" from depots and the appearance of heavy weapons in the security zone. The SMM's weekly report suggests the "disappearance" of more than 700 items of military equipment from the Ukrainian depots.

Between 13 and 21 June, 24 units of equipment belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces, including 13 Rapira anti-tank guns in Kremenivka, 4 Msta-B howitzers in Pryvilne,

2 Akatsiya howitzers in Novookhtyrka as well as a surface-to-air missile system and armoured vehicles in Avdiivka and Nyzhnie were reported by the SMM in violation of the Package of Measures and the Addendum.

In addition, the information being received about the transfer of additional weapons, including aircraft, into the conflict zone and about the “mopping up” in towns and villages at the line of contact, for example in Marinka, requires verification. All this would suggest that the Ukrainian Government has still not abandoned a military scenario.

Continuing tension at the line of contact cannot be used as a pretext for refusing to agree on the political issues of a settlement. This tactic has been used by the Ukrainian Government for too long already.

In applying the Package of Measures, it is essential to proceed from the understanding that the political aspects can be implemented only if the necessary security requirements are met and vice versa.

The modalities for local elections should be formalized in Ukrainian legislation in the form agreed upon with Donetsk and Luhansk. Unilateral steps by the Ukrainian Government – the submission to the Verkhovna Rada of draft laws on this topic that have not been agreed upon and other steps connected with elections, such as deciding on the dates to hold them – result in an unavoidable mirror response on the part of Donbas.

It is essential to introduce amendments to the law on the special procedure for local self-government (on the special status), as was agreed by the Normandy quartet leaders in Paris in October 2015 and to decide on a procedure for its entry into force on the basis of the so-called Steinmeier formula. A law on amnesty should enter into force, and the point of the Package of Measures on prohibiting prosecution and punishment of persons in connection with the events that took place in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions also needs to be implemented. It is pointless holding elections until these issues have been resolved. People must understand what they are voting for and what status they will receive after the elections. It is obvious that the so-called anti-terrorist operation must have ended by then.

It is inadmissible to put forward additional conditions for the holding of elections, which distort or directly violate the Package of Measures and are also aimed at dragging out the political process without good reason.

One of the conditions is the demand to restore control over the border. Restoring control over the border can take place only once legal guarantees are ensured for the rights of the residents of Donbas, as set out in the note to the Package of Measures. It goes without saying that the possibility of a resumption of a punitive operation must be completely ruled out. This is also the logic reflected in the Package of Measures: first, elections and implementing the specific details of local self-government, and then restoring control over the border together with constitutional reform.

Thank you for your attention.