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Delegation of France

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR CHRISTINE FAGES,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE TO THE OSCE,
AT THE 1309th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 April 2021

Right of reply on behalf of France and Germany

As our countries have been mentioned, I should like, on behalf of France and Germany, to make a number of clarifications following the statement made by the Russian delegation.

First, regarding Russia's responsibility for settling this conflict, I would recall that the Minsk agreements remain the only framework for the settlement of this conflict. All of these agreements were signed on behalf of the Russian Federation by its official representative. Russia thus clearly and bindingly accepted its responsibility for a peaceful settlement of the conflict and the implementation of the provisions of these agreements.

Regarding consultation with the representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, this is explicitly provided for only in paragraphs 9, 11 (constitutional reform, legislation on the special status) and 12 (local elections) of the Package of Measures. The text makes no mention of the need to establish "direct dialogue" between the Government of Ukraine and the separatists. The Minsk Protocol is unambiguous – I quote: "[T]he Trilateral Contact Group [consists] of representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)." It is chaired by the OSCE.

Rather than putting all the blame for the impasse on Ukraine, Russia should show a constructive approach and assume its responsibilities both in the Normandy format and in the Trilateral Contact Group. We also call on it to make greater use of the influence it has over the *de facto* representatives of the areas not controlled by the Ukrainian Government.

As indicated in their statements issued on 3 and 10 April, both France and Germany are deeply concerned about the increasing number of ceasefire violations and the recent deterioration of the security situation in eastern Ukraine. While the parties' renewed commitment to the ceasefire last July had allowed for an unprecedented decrease in violence since the signing of the Minsk agreements, we have observed in recent weeks a diminished respect for the ceasefire and regret in particular the increase in the number of victims among the Ukrainian armed forces and civilians since the beginning of 2021. We continue to monitor the situation extremely closely, where the risk of escalation should not be underestimated.

In conclusion, France and Germany reaffirm their support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Our two countries are continuing their efforts in the Normandy format to ensure the full implementation of the Minsk agreements and negotiations are being held regularly to this end. Rest assured that the commitment of France and Germany will not waver.