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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1179th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 March 2018

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the fivefold decrease in the number of ceasefire violations over the week since the “spring ceasefire” took effect. But the threat that hostilities will resume remains. The Ukrainian Government has not abandoned its militaristic rhetoric or its plans to “cleanse” Donbas of dissenters.

Bringing in a lasting ceasefire requires the sides to publish their ceasefire orders, take measures against violators, stop the practice of a “creeping offensive” that brings the sides’ positions closer together, withdraw heavy weapons to the set distances, in particular, away from populated areas, and ensure the security of civilian infrastructure.

We see no signs that the Ukrainian Government is ready to withdraw heavy weapons and begin disengagement of forces and hardware in the Stanytsia Luhanska area where, according to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), the local ceasefire has held for at least the required seven days. There are hopes now that disengagement will take place on 18 March. The idea of an “Easter” ceasefire starting on 1 April was discussed at the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) meeting in Minsk on 14 March. At the same time, redeployment of weapons to the line of contact continues. Over the week from 5 to 11 March, monitors spotted 20 pieces of Ukrainian armed forces military equipment in violation of the Minsk Package of Measures. More than 200 pieces of weaponry were missing from Ukrainian armed forces storage depots. On 6 March in Marinka, a Ukrainian military Mi-8 helicopter was spotted in violation of paragraph 7 of the Minsk Memorandum of 19 September 2014. On 9 March, the Ukrainian armed forces held live-fire exercises at Lomakyne in violation of the TCG decision of 3 March 2016.

If the Ukrainian Government cannot be compelled to respect the ceasefire, we should at least make every possible effort to prevent the situation from escalating. More intensive patrolling by the SMM is needed along the line of contact.

We cannot accept the Ukrainian armed forces' refusal to examine requests for carrying out repair work sent by the authorities in certain areas of Donbas. The demand that documents be solely in Ukrainian demonstrates the Ukrainian Government's intention to keep stoking the conflict. We call on the Italian OSCE Chairmanship and all interested States to influence the Ukrainian authorities.

Recently, the Ukrainian armed forces have regularly shelled infrastructure leading to the Donetsk Filtration Station (DFS). On 7 March, a truck delivering fuel to the DFS came under fire. Over the past week, the bus carrying DFS workers came under fire on three occasions.

We thank the SMM for their prompt response and their decision to accompany the next shift of DFS workers, which enabled the station to continue operation. We call on the SMM to continue this practice of accompanying DFS vehicles until the situation with security guarantees for the station's work is fully settled.

We note that the domestic political struggle in Ukraine is heating up and nationalists have stepped up their activity. We call on the SMM to pay greater attention to reporting all cases of aggressive acts by the radicals.

We wish to warn our United States colleagues from continuing their policy of encouraging Ukrainian nationalism. If you genuinely care about strengthening Ukraine's sovereignty, then persuade the Ukrainian authorities to swiftly implement the Minsk agreements and a comprehensive political settlement, including a special status for Donbas, hold elections and carry out constitutional reform. Flirting with the radicals, all the more so those who espouse neo-Nazi ideology, will not bring any good.

Ukrainian radical nationalists are spreading their activity and are actively seeking support abroad and are recruiting to their ranks young people from Germany, the United Kingdom and other European countries. Articles on this issue have appeared even in the Western media – in *Der Spiegel* and *The Guardian*. Radical nationalism threatens the stability of European society. A collective international response is needed.

The nationalists continue to attack the Orthodox Church in Ukraine. In Kyiv, on the night of 10 March, radicals set fire to a wooden chapel belonging to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. This was not the first such attack this year. In January, Molotov cocktails were thrown at the Church of the Icon of the Mother of God.

The radicals pursue criminal aims too, hoping to seize by force prime land in central Kyiv. Criminal lawlessness is spreading in Ukraine. During settlings of scores in Kyiv on 7 and 8 March, two hand grenades were thrown at a car carrying Ukrainian Security Service officers, and a restaurant was shot at from a grenade launcher.

Ukrainian nationalism is acquiring ever uglier forms. The Verkhovna Rada has drawn up a draft law on total Ukrainization. The proposed provisions include sole use of the Ukrainian language for examinations and certification, provision of medical services, working with patients, and provision of everyday consumer services, as well as mandatory translation of all posters and exhibitions. The repeal of the law on the basic principles of language policy demonstrated that the nationalists can act without limits.

Mr. Chairperson,

Russia will hold a presidential election on 18 March. In accordance with international practice, we will open polling stations abroad too, including in Ukraine – at the Russian embassy in Kyiv and the Russian consulates general in Kharkiv, Odessa and Lviv. Ukrainian nationalists from Right Sector, the National Corps and Svoboda have publicly threatened the safety of Russia's diplomatic missions and Russian citizens coming to the polling stations. They have promised to block entry to our diplomatic missions in order to prevent Russians from freely exercising their right to vote.

We call on the Ukrainian Government to respect in full its international commitments, including under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

In conclusion, we recall once again that the only road to a peaceful settlement of the crisis in Ukraine is full implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures through direct dialogue between Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk. As before, we remain ready to do everything we can to help this. We hope the other OSCE participating States will make similar efforts.

Thank you for your attention.