

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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AT THE 1216th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 February 2019

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation in Ukraine is becoming ever more depressing. The closer we get to the presidential election, the more dangerous the adventures the current authorities in Kyiv undertake. They are no longer trying to hide behind arguments about commitment to democratic values, arguments that have been devalued in their mouths. In pursuit of the electorate's votes, the ruling elite in Kyiv and President Petro Poroshenko personally have openly sided with the most rabid extremists and radicals preaching war and violence. With the support and direct involvement of the authorities, xenophobia and ethnic, linguistic and religious intolerance are being inculcated in society, and militant nationalist ideas cultivated. These steps are supported by laws.

As a result of recent decisions by the Ukrainian Government, millions of Ukrainians will be deprived of the right to participate in the forthcoming election. Despite the call by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR) to adhere to OSCE standards, the Ukrainian Government intends to restrict international observation of the election as well. On 4 February, Mr. Poroshenko declared that he would personally give instructions to the Ukrainian State Border Service not to allow Russian observers into the country as part of international missions. At the same time, a draft law is before the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on prohibiting by law the participation of Russian observers in presidential and parliamentary elections. The threat of being denied entry does not apply only to Russian citizens. Last week, the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Arsen Avakov, promised to check all international observers at the presidential election against the lists on the extremist Mirotvorets website. It may be recalled that, in violation of the current rules on the protection of personal data, the personal details of people who have displeased the nationalists in Kyiv are posted there. Some of them have already been killed. As you are aware, many European elected officials and public figures have ended up on the Mirotvorets blacklist. Personal details of politicians from France, Italy, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary are currently posted there. Not so long ago, just last year, a group of deputies from the German Bundestag also appeared on the list. We once again urge

the OSCE to pay close attention to this and encourage the countries “sheltering” this website that violates human rights on their servers to close it down immediately.

I dare say that not a day goes by without actions or statements by the Ukrainian authorities deepening the divide in society. The flagrant and cavalier interference in church affairs and the pressure on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church for blatantly political purposes have already led to manifestations of religious violence. The most outrageous incident occurred on 3 February in the village of Gnezdychno in the Ternopil region, where nationalist provocation outside the Church of the Holy Transfiguration resulted in its archpriest, Stefan Balan, being beaten up. The nationalists demanded that he convert to the new church structure. It is noteworthy that the police and local authorities actually sided with the attackers. What about the assurances given to us by the Ukrainian authorities that they would defend any choice? As usual, it turns out that they are not practising what they preach. However, this is not surprising. The Ukrainian Government’s representatives cannot be believed today.

Recently, the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture published a list of religious organizations that will be required over the next three months to change their charter and name, as well as go through the procedure of State re-registration. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church has been included in that list. If it refuses to do so, it is threatened with forcible renaming. This is direct interference in church affairs and a violation of religious freedom. We urge the ODHIR and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also Focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions, Ms. Ingeborg Gabriel, to pay the closest attention to this situation.

Instead of broad-based national dialogue, there are forcible attempts to instil in Ukrainians values that are unpopular in society. The Kyiv authorities continue their policy of comprehensively rewriting history and attempting to vindicate Nazi collaborators during the Second World War. The height of cynicism was the declaration of the birthday of the odious Ukrainian nationalist and Nazi collaborator, Stepan Bandera, as a public holiday, and also the inauguration in Kyiv on the eve of International Holocaust Remembrance Day of a bas-relief of Symon Petliura, who was responsible for a wave of anti-Jewish pogroms in Ukraine in 1919 and 1920. Neo-Nazism is in fact finding followers among young people. Recently, the Ukrainian State Institute of National Remembrance made a game publicly available, which glorifies the criminal activities of Ukrainian nationalists known for their brutality towards the Russian, Polish, Jewish and even the Ukrainian population.

Mr. Chairperson,

The desire of the current leadership of Ukraine to remain in power goes beyond the bounds of common sense. The suppression of dissent, support for radicalism and massive pressure on the opposition are becoming commonplace. The day before yesterday, the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine announced the start of a criminal investigation into the leader of one of the opposition parties, Mr. Viktor Medvedchuk, following his comments on the need for direct dialogue with Donbas and on granting it special status within Ukraine in accordance with the Minsk Package of Measures. Criminal proceedings were opened against him on suspicion of treason and threatening territorial integrity. This, then, is the price for calling for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. And all this is against the

background of Mr. Poroshenko's statements that no special statuses are foreseen in Ukraine at all. What about the Minsk Package of Measures then?

The Ukrainian Government is deliberately blocking implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures, which they themselves signed. Over the past four years, practically nothing has been done in the political sphere – the special status of Donbas has not been permanently established, no procedure has been determined for its entry into force under the Steinmeier formula, and there has been no progress on the amnesty and local elections. The risk of escalation in the military sphere remains. The “creeping offensive” tactics of the Ukrainian armed forces (advancing deep into the “grey zones”, as Mr. Yuriy Biryukov, adviser to Petro Poroshenko, recently said) have resulted in the positions of the sides moving dangerously close to one another in some areas. Recent reports by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) confirmed the arrival in Donbas of further trains carrying tanks and rocket and tube artillery at Kostiantynivka station in the Donetsk region and in Rubizhne in the Luhansk region.

Ukraine continues to sabotage the disengagement of forces and hardware in Stanytsia Luhanska. The Ukrainian armed forces have stubbornly refused to begin the disengagement, ignoring the conditions that have been in place for this since December of last year. On 31 January, the silence regime inside the disengagement area was violated once more. As we can see from the SMM report of 2 February, shots were fired from the direction of Ukrainian armed forces' positions.

The situation is deteriorating in the other disengagement areas. There are problems in Petrivske. On 24 January, the SMM discovered fresh trenches dug by the Ukrainian armed forces in Zolote. Less than a week later, the Mission spotted two groups of Ukrainian soldiers and a military truck there. Also in Zolote, in violation of Point 7 of the Minsk Memorandum of 19 September 2014, Ukraine continues to use its unmanned aerial vehicles to adjust artillery fire (the relevant videos were posted on Ukrainian sites). On 30 January, on the southern boundary of the disengagement area, the SMM recorded the consequences of the mortar shelling of a militia checkpoint. A tragedy was narrowly avoided on 4 February when shells exploded close to an SMM patrol near the disengagement area.

We strongly condemn any actions that endanger the Mission's monitors. We would point out that a timely response by the SMM to the advancement and strengthening of Ukrainian armed forces' positions in Zolote could help to prevent new incidents. We need to ensure that the Ukrainian side desists from its attempts to provoke military tension.

Mr. Chairperson,

The difficult humanitarian situation unfolding near the line of contact is a direct consequence of Ukraine's sabotage of its commitments under the Minsk agreements. The economic and transport blockade that is suffocating Donbas continues, as a result of which there are long queues at the checkpoints to cross the line of contact.

The key obstacle to resolving the crisis and normalizing people's lives is the absence of a clear response by the Western countries to the Ukrainian Government's unwillingness to implement the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202. There are proposals for launching some new settlement formats, which only distract from the main task – facilitating the rapid implementation of the

Minsk agreements. As a result, the Ukrainian Government is provoking new adventures, fraught with the risk of a return to hostilities and the destruction of the entire peace process. Each new day brings only further losses. We trust that the OSCE participating States will nevertheless provide principled assessments of the Ukrainian Government's actions and call on the Ukrainian authorities to strictly honour their commitments. They must finally realize in the Ukrainian capital that the implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures does not mean capitulation for Ukraine, but a chance for a peaceful future and development.

Thank you for your attention.