

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1183rd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

26 April 2018

**In response to the reports by the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special
Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, and the
Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and
in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Martin Sajdik**

We welcome the distinguished Ambassadors Martin Sajdik and Ertuğrul Apakan to the Permanent Council meeting. We share many of your assessments and above all support the call to put an end, at long last, to the attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. The “spring ceasefire” has resulted in only a temporary period of calm.

The Ukrainian Government ignored the “Easter ceasefire” completely. In April, we have seen a systematic build-up of the Ukrainian security forces’ military presence at the line of contact and increased shelling, especially of civilian facilities. We have spoken of the indiscriminate nature of the use of artillery by the Ukrainian Government. It now looks as though precisely civilian infrastructure and civilians have become the security forces’ standard targets. Over the past month, five civilians were injured and more than 30 houses damaged in Donetsk and Staromykhailivka. A woman was killed and a house damaged in Horlivka. Five workers at the Donetsk filtration station were injured, along with a woman in Olenivka and three civilians in the village of Kreminets. Sixteen houses suffered damage in Sakhanka, two houses in Yasynuvata and one building in Dokuchaievsk. Kominternove was shelled.

It is clear that the Ukrainian Government is breaking the ceasefire.

The Ukrainian armed forces have not published orders prohibiting violations of the ceasefire regime. A considerable quantity of equipment belonging to the Ukrainian security forces has been moved up to the line of contact. Only 17 per cent of the declared hardware is to be found at the storage sites.

We need a detailed analysis of the outrageous shelling of Donetsk filtration station workers. It is important to determine more clearly where the firing is coming from. We welcome the efforts of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) to escort the filtration station employees as this basically ensures their safety. Evidently, this kind of

support will be needed on a permanent basis. This is a concrete benefit that the monitors can provide. This practice should be extended to all civilian infrastructure facilities along the line of contact. We urge the SMM monitors to co-operate more closely with the authorities of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the important efforts to facilitate repair work.

In the light of the punitive operation being renamed the “Combined Forces Operation” and the upcoming public holidays in May, the risk of provocations is growing. The monitors must redouble their vigilance, increase their patrols along the line of contact and carefully investigate all the circumstances of the shelling and its consequences. We once again call on the SMM leadership not to yield to pressure from the host State. In the event that civilian infrastructure is shelled and civilians injured or killed, these developments need to be recorded immediately and reported. In the most tragic cases involving civilian casualties, a special report needs to be issued. Human lives deserve more attention than military hardware. The targeted buildings and infrastructure need to be clearly identified. The practice of identifying where the shelling came from should be resumed.

It is the Ukrainian Government and not Luhansk that is systematically and persistently disrupting all attempts to complete the disengagement of forces in the Stanytsia Luhanska area. The Ukrainian Government’s representatives in the Trilateral Contact Group do not even try to hide this fact. We ask Ambassador Apakan to let us know how many times there has been a seven-day period of complete calm, after which the disengagement of forces was meant to take place.

The security forces have now taken up positions inside the disengagement area at Zolote. This runs the risk of fresh escalation, along the lines of what happened after the Ukrainian armed forces occupied the Avdiivka industrial zone, Shyrokyne, Travneve, Hladosove and Novooleksandrivka and advanced towards Olenivka.

We note the continuing hazard of mines in Donbas. A year after the tragic death of United States paramedic Joseph Stone, we have yet to see results from the investigation as promised.

Now the monitors are recording fresh mines, mainly in territory controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces. Over 600 anti-tank mines were discovered right next to security forces’ positions north of Shyrokyne. The monitors’ access to Ukrainian armed forces-controlled areas near Stanytsia Luhanska, Shchastia, Popasna, Zolote and other places has been blocked completely under the pretext of the mine threat. The attempt to pass over in silence these obstacles to the SMM’s monitoring activities skews the statistics in favour of one of the parties to the conflict. Another example of the SMM’s total “blindness” is the forced suspension of the Popasna patrol base’s operations because of firing by the Ukrainian armed forces in its immediate proximity.

Distinguished Ambassadors Sajdik and Apakan,

Tension is growing in Donbas against the background of domestic political unrest in Ukraine. The so-called law on the reintegration of Donbas justifies the use of military force against the civilian population and establishes the prosecution of persons involved in the events in Donbas after 2014. This contravenes the spirit and the letter of the Minsk Package of Measures. The statements made by President Petro Poroshenko, Interior Minister

Arsen Avakov and General Serhiy Nayev, commander of the “Combined Forces Operation”, in the wake of this law stoke militaristic sentiment. We repeat our call to Ambassador Sajdik and the SMM leadership to analyse the compliance of the so-called law on the reintegration of Donbas with the provisions of the Minsk Package of Measures.

We recall that the SMM mandate contains a provision to monitor and support respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. There are many cases requiring a report. They include not only actions on the part of nationalists, but also on the part of the Government.

The discriminatory law on education has seriously violated the rights of the Russian-speaking population and national minorities living in Ukraine, who have been deprived of the opportunity to be taught in their native language. This is a flagrant violation of OSCE commitments and the Ukrainian Constitution.

There was an attack on the Kyiv office of the Russian Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo) in 2018 at a time when lessons for children were taking place. The Hungarian cultural centre in Uzhgorod was set on fire and there was an arson attack on the Polish Note centre. Radical nationalists do nothing to hide their crimes. Leaders of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, Right Sector and C14 openly threaten Russian representative offices in Ukraine. Radicals in Lviv marched under the slogan “the city of Lviv is not for Poles.” Nationalists in Uzhgorod beat up people who were protesting against a neo-Nazi march. Nine cars with Hungarian licence plates were set on fire in Berehove in a single night.

An SMM thematic report on manifestations of radical nationalism, neo-Nazism and racial intolerance in Ukraine is long overdue. It would be useful to intensify monitoring activities in areas with a large national minority population. The situation as regards the Russian language and minority languages needs to be monitored.

The SMM should pay attention to attacks on the Orthodox Church, persecution of journalists, restrictions on freedom of speech and obstacles to an independent justice system. We see that the Mission is following the cases of Vasily Muravitsky, Nelya Shtepa and Nadiya Savchenko. We suggest that as part of this work the monitors visit them in prison. There are countless other political prisoners in Ukraine who also deserve attention.

We call on Ambassador Sajdik to continue the attempts to establish direct dialogue between Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk to agree on measures for the settlement of the crisis, as provided for in the Minsk Package of Measures.

The negotiations in the Trilateral Contact Group on political issues need fresh impetus. They should at the very least set down on paper the Steinmeier formula, which links the holding of local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions with the entry into force of the law on a special status for Donbas.

An important step towards an internal Ukrainian settlement must be the exchange of detained persons on the basis of the principle “all for all” and the associated amnesty. It is clear that, after the entry into force of the so-called law on the reintegration of Donbas, work in this area is on the brink of collapse.

It is necessary to intensify efforts to repair the bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska, simplify the regime for civilians crossing the line of contact, and ensure an uninterrupted supply of water to Donbas and the operation of mobile communication providers. The Ukrainian Government's policy of suppressing the population of Donetsk and Luhansk only exacerbates internal divisions and drives Donbas further away. Depoliticized dialogue is needed between Kyiv, Luhansk and Donetsk on humanitarian and economic issues.

In conclusion, let me once again thank the distinguished Ambassadors Sajdik and Apakan for their difficult but extremely responsible work and pass on our words of gratitude to all the SMM monitors.

Thank you for your attention.