

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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AT THE 1182nd 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,

Four years have passed since the Ukrainian Government began the punitive operation, hypocritically called the “Anti-Terrorist Operation”, against the people of Donbas. Renaming it the “Combined Forces Operation”, which, according to Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko will begin on 30 April, does not change its essence. In violation of the Ukrainian Constitution, the Ukrainian Government is using the armed forces, militarized structures, foreign mercenaries and volunteer punitive groups against the civilian population.

We see continued indiscriminate shelling of residential areas, which suffered huge casualties and destruction in the summer of 2014. The Ukrainian security forces broke the “Easter ceasefire” despite the fact that on 29 March the leaders of the Normandy format countries, including Petro Poroshenko, underscored the need for strict compliance with it and reiterated their commitment to implementing the Minsk agreements.

On 11 April, Donetsk and Staromykhailivka were shelled. According to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), 3 civilians were injured and 23 houses were damaged when Donetsk was shelled by 120 mm mortars firing from the north-west direction. In Staromykhailivka two civilians were injured and ten homes were damaged. On 14 April, Yasynuvata was shelled and two houses were damaged. Over the last two weeks, from 4 to 18 April, 14 civilians were injured and 70 homes and 5 infrastructure sites were damaged.

On 17 April, the Ukrainian armed forces used SMM aerial survey data to direct fire at military hardware preparing in Luhansk to take part in the Great Patriotic War Victory Day military parade. This is unacceptable.

A bus carrying workers at the Donetsk filtration station came under fire that same day, 17 April, from the western side of the road (the Ukrainian armed forces’ dugout is located on that side, 70 metres from the filtration station). Five people sustained injuries of

varying seriousness. The filtration station was closed down and the workers were evacuated. This jeopardizes the water supply for more than 600,000 people.

We hope that the filtration station will resume work very soon and that security guarantees for its personnel will be respected. The SMM has a crucial role to play here. While the SMM monitors were escorting the filtration station workers, the Ukrainian armed forces refrained from their attacks.

We continue to see a build-up of weaponry along the line of contact. Since the start of the “Easter ceasefire”, in violation of the Minsk Package of Measures, the SMM has spotted more than 100 pieces of Ukrainian armed forces’ weaponry. The Ukrainian armed forces are stationing hardware within populated areas. On 13 April, the SMM spotted five Ukrainian armed forces’ howitzers 100 metres from a residential district in Vidrozhennia, and the next day they spotted a howitzer on the eastern outskirts of Bohdanivka.

The Ukrainian armed forces’ “creeping offensive” continues. On 15 April, the SMM spotted a combat reconnaissance vehicle with four Ukrainian armed forces personnel within the disengagement area at Zolote. There is a clear danger of a repeat of the scenario at Shyrokyne, which after demilitarization was occupied by the Ukrainian armed forces. Before implementing the good ideas about creating security zones around infrastructure facilities along the line of contact we first need to ensure guarantees that they will not be occupied by the Ukrainian armed forces.

We draw attention to the continued threat that mines pose to SMM monitors and Donbas civilians. Exactly a year has passed since an SMM vehicle hit a mine at Pryshyb in the Luhansk region, resulting in the tragic death of US paramedic Joseph Stone. Going by the conclusions of the international fact-finding commission, it seems, as our British colleagues would say, “highly likely” that the Ukrainian armed forces laid this mine and followed its detonation from afar.

Last week the SMM discovered new minefields around Avdiivka, Marinka, Maiorsk and Lebedynske. The Ukrainian Government continues its tactic of selectively obstructing the SMM using the pretext of mine hazards. The Ukrainian armed forces have long since closed access for the monitors to the areas around Stanytsia Luhanska, Zolote, Shchastia and other places. In areas where the Ukrainian armed forces have carried out demining the SMM has discovered new mine obstructions just a short time later.

The Ukrainian Government’s militaristic rhetoric continues to grow. Just before the visit to the United States of America by Ukrainian Interior Minister Arsen Avakov, the Ukrainian Interior Ministry’s official Facebook page announced the return of Donbas by force “with the use of peacekeepers”. If you have forgotten, let us recall that point 9 of the Package of Measures sets out the procedures for the return of Ukrainian Government control over the border. The condition for this is a comprehensive political settlement, the parameters of which are also set out in the Package of Measures.

The Ukrainian Government is acting as though the Minsk agreements do not concern Ukraine. We again call on the OSCE to analyse the so-called law on “reintegration of Donbas” and other pseudo-legal Ukrainian Government actions to assess their compliance with the Package of Measures.

We have the impression that the Ukrainian Government believes that prolonging the conflict is to its advantage. The authorities are doing everything they can to drive the settlement process into a dead end. They refuse to engage in direct dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk. Yesterday, at the Trilateral Contact Group meeting in Minsk, the Ukrainian side again sabotaged discussion on the political aspects of the settlement when setting the agenda for a meeting of the Working Group on Political Issues.

The Ukrainian Government is creating a situation that repeats the causes that originally sparked the conflict in the first place. Persecution of the Russian language and culture, the Orthodox Church and journalists continues. Three years have passed since the murder of Oles Buzina in Kyiv. This crime has not yet been solved despite the fact that the suspects were caught almost immediately. An Orthodox Church on Herzen street in Kyiv was set on fire. This is the fifth attempt to burn down this church since 2013.

Nationalists' lawlessness continues uninterrupted. Last week, radicals attempted to disrupt wreath-laying ceremonies at monuments to Second World War heroes General Nikolai Vatutin in Kyiv and the Unknown Sailor in Odessa.

We are surprised by the Western countries' hypocrisy and double standards with regard to the Ukrainian crisis. There are reports that "hero of Ukraine" Nadiya Savchenko has begun a punishing hunger strike in Ukrainian detention. This, of course, is Ukraine's internal affair, but we find it interesting to follow the fate of someone who was on so many occasions the subject of a special item under the current issues section. And now there is silence.

We are following even more closely the fate of the crew of the vessel *Nord*. These Russian citizens remain in Ukrainian detention.

Mr. Chairperson,

In conclusion, we should like to repeat that there is no alternative to a comprehensive political settlement on the basis of the Minsk Package of Measures and direct dialogue between the parties to the internal Ukrainian conflict – Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk.

The people of Donbas deserve a peaceful sky and the right to live without fear of being shelled at night. They deserve access to water, electricity and a normal peaceful life without threat to their values, without the danger of being subjected to torture, abuse and pillaging by so-called Ukrainian patriots and security services.

This is not brought any closer by hypocritical pontificating about violations of international law, aggression and occupation by repeated violators of international law who have torn away part of Serbia, destroyed peaceful life in Iraq and Libya, and only days before committed another act of aggression against Syria. And all of this under the pretext of yet another "Colin Powell's test tubes."

If the Western countries genuinely wish to see peace in Ukraine it is within their power to use their considerable influence – political and financial – on the Ukrainian Government to persuade them to implement the Minsk agreements.