

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1181st 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,

The situation in Ukraine continues to deteriorate. The conflict in the country's south-east, which began four years ago following the government's refusal to respect the rights of the region's people, is still far from being settled. The Ukrainian armed forces and the nationalist battalions continue their provocations along the line of contact. They shell civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, kindergartens and homes. They kill civilians, including women, children and the elderly.

The Ukrainian Government refuses to implement the Package of Measures signed on 12 February 2015 in Minsk. It enacts laws that go against the spirit and the letter of this document that lays the foundation for resolving the internal Ukrainian conflict. The Government continues its economic blockade of Donbas, thus isolating this region even further from the rest of the country. As the Ukrainian presidential and parliamentary elections approach, we can expect to see the Ukrainian Government turn up the tension even higher.

The "spring" and "Easter" ceasefires did not end up reinforcing a ceasefire regime in the region. The Ukrainian armed forces never did publish orders for a ceasefire and did not withdraw the radical battalions from the line of contact. Obviously, even during these Easter days, the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" is not law for them. They continued indiscriminate shelling of towns in Donbas. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) reported that a woman was killed in Horlivka on 25 March and a house was damaged. Twelve houses were damaged in Sakhanka on 27 March, an apartment block was damaged in Dokuchaievsk on 31 March, three houses were damaged in Sakhanka on 5 April, and a woman was injured in Olenivka on 7 April. On 1 April, the security forces fired a guided anti-tank missile at a militia ambulance that was clearly identifiable as such. They spare no one and are flagrantly trampling underfoot the norms of international humanitarian law.

The Ukrainian Government was responsible for the failure to implement the disengagement of forces and hardware in Stanytsia Luhanska on 10 April, which had been agreed in the Trilateral Contact Group. Ukrainian armed forces personnel have been sighted within the disengagement area at Zolote (28 March). In violation of the Minsk Package of Measures, over these past two weeks more than 40 pieces of Ukrainian armed forces' weaponry have been spotted, including multiple-launch rocket systems in Poltavka and S-300 anti-aircraft systems in Volodarske. Deployment of Ukrainian military personnel to Donbas continues via the railway stations of Rubizhne and Zachativka. The Donetsk filtration station remains at risk of shelling by Ukrainian forces.

We urge the SMM to concentrate its monitoring work on the situation along the line of contact. We need detailed information about damage to civilian infrastructure and civilian casualties. The monitors should ensure equal patrol coverage of both sides of the line of contact, including with the help of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

The Ukrainian Government is actively obstructing the SMM's aerial monitoring. In just the first week since the launch of long-range UAVs, they were jammed on four occasions from government-controlled territory: near Dacha on 4 April, at Klishchiivka on 5 April, at Popasna on 8 April and at Stepanivka on 9 April.

We call on the SMM to increase its co-operation with Donetsk and Luhansk in all areas of current work, including through militia representation in the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC).

Russian officers will return to the JCCC on the condition that they receive security guarantees and a legal status, set out in writing, that they not have to provide biometric data when crossing the border, that rules for the JCCC's work be approved, and that representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions be included once more in its composition. So far, we see that the Ukrainian Government is not ready to consider these conditions.

The Ukrainian Government does not seek to normalize the situation in Donbas. It supports the "war party" and stokes militaristic sentiment. The so-called law on "reintegration of Donbas", which came into force on 24 February, legalizes the use of force as the means to settle the internal Ukrainian conflict and enshrines a policy of prosecuting people in connection with the events in south-east Ukraine.

The Ukrainian armed forces have already noted the signals sent by their Government. Commander of the Ukrainian armed forces combined operations headquarters in Donbas General Serhiy Naiev, in an interview with the newspaper *Pravitelstvenny Kuryer*, said that he will speak with militia representatives only "from a position of military force", and that the armed forces would carry out "any tasks to liberate the non-government controlled territories." Are you planning a "final solution" to the Donbas issue? It reminds us of something ...

We have requested that the OSCE, working with the SMM, make a comparative analysis of the degree to which the Ukrainian law on so-called "reintegration of Donbas" respects Ukraine's obligations under the Minsk Package of Measures.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is no secret that the Ukrainian Government acts with the encouragement and on the instructions of its sponsors abroad, which support the “Maidan Government” with financial and military supplies. This explains the Ukrainian Government’s hasty eagerness to join the United States of America’s anti-Russian sanctions. What is surprising is that France too has recently decided to join in giving Ukraine military support. They agreed to sell dual-purpose helicopters to Ukraine. The Ukrainian Government has already stated how it plans to use them. It is not clear how the French Government’s decision fits with its role in the settlement process taking place in the Normandy format. Are you trying to fight fire with fire?

By turning up the militarist rhetoric in the country in the run-up to elections, the Ukrainian Government is trying to clear the political field. First, the authorities expelled from the country the war criminal Mikheil Saakashvili, who they themselves had invited, then they arrested Volodymyr Ruban, who took part in organizing prisoner exchanges, and just recently, it was the turn of former “hero of Ukraine” Nadiya Savchenko. But where are the calls from Western countries, which in 2016 organized flash mobs at the OSCE calling for “the immediate release of Savchenko”?

The Ukrainian judicial system is characterized by complete lawlessness and arbitrariness. We have yet to see results from the investigations into the “Maidan snipers” case, the burning of the Trade Union House in Odessa, and the murders of journalists Oles Buzina and Pavel Sheremet. Legal cases against supporters of the “Maidan” are stalled. Just recently, the Prosecutor General’s Office changed the charges against Ivan Bubenchik, one of those who shot at people during the “Maidan” protests, to new charges that came under the law on amnesty. International human rights organizations confirm cases of torture in the Ukrainian Security Service’s secret prisons. In its report of 3 March, the SMM notes numerous cases of Ukrainian law enforcement agencies and radicals putting pressure on the courts.

Ukrainian aggressive nationalism is becoming an increasingly serious problem and the authorities are encouraging it. The SMM confirms that supporters of Right Sector, National Corps and other nationalist organizations hold regular meetings that degenerate into scuffles with the police and other unlawful acts. Radicals continue their attacks against the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church. On 6 April, they set fire to the Church of the Lord’s Transfiguration in Kyiv. On 2 April, people dressed in military-style outfits burst into a church in the well-known village of Ptycha in the Rivne region and forcibly expelled two elderly female parishioners from the building.

National minorities are being forced out of areas where they had been concentrated in larger numbers, and there is a policy of forced Ukrainization. On 25 March, the Polish Note cultural centre was burned in Odessa. This was the third such attack following attacks on Russian and Hungarian cultural centres, also carried out by nationalists this year with the authorities’ indulgence. The Ukrainian Government backs the radicals with force of its own in order to suppress public discontent. Under the pretext of a “threat to Ukraine’s territorial integrity”, the Defence Ministry has decided to deploy a 1,000-strong battalion to Berehove, an area home to many Hungarians. Let me ask the Ukrainian representative: Are you planning to carry out ethnic cleansing? I recall our appeal to the SMM to prepare a thematic report on manifestations of radical nationalism, neo-Nazism and extremism in Ukraine.

Mr. Chairperson,

The anti-Russian campaign in Ukraine is gathering strength. The Ukrainian Government passes new laws that further the discrimination against the Russian-speaking population and Russians coming to Ukraine, and infringes on the rights of national minorities. Despite a critical assessment by the Council of Europe's Venice Commission of the new Ukrainian law on education, this law has not been repealed and discriminatory amendments have been added. The Ukrainian Government's attempts to sign separate agreements with "close States" that have national minorities in Ukraine, so as to remove their languages from the scope of the law's application, are counter-productive. The law is a gross violation of OSCE commitments on protection of national minorities and contradicts a number of key international agreements in this area, as well as point 11 of the Minsk Package of Measures.

Other evidence of Ukraine's openly provocative and inhumane acts include the National Security and Defence Council's decision on urgent measures to neutralize national security threats in the area of migration policy, which came into force on 17 March. On 25 March, Ukrainian border guards in the Azov Sea illegally detained and hijacked to the port of Berdiansk the fishing vessel Nord, which was flying the Russian flag. On 10 April, a request from the Ukrainian prosecutor's office was approved to detain a vessel belonging to the Russian company Sea Breeze. The lists of the notorious website Mirotvorets remain open, now on a server in the United States, and are constantly updated. There has still been no response from the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to this outrageous violation.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Ukrainian Government refuses to wake up to the fact that it needs the Minsk Package of Measures no less, and even more, than the rest of the international community. Peace can be achieved only through direct dialogue between Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk. The Trilateral Contact Group should 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 a law on a special status for Donbas. It is time for the Ukrainian Government to start thinking seriously about de-escalation measures rather than encouraging radicalism and militaristic sentiment.

Thank you for your attention.