

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. DMITRY BALAKIN,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1190th 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,

Once again, the situation in Donbas is worsening. In an interview given by the Principal Deputy Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), Alexander Hug, to Russia's *Kommersant* newspaper on 19 June, he said that the number of ceasefire violations increased by 70 per cent over the last week, and there was a fourfold increase in weaponry deployed in violation of the withdrawal lines.

The Ukrainian Government is again provoking military tension in Donbas. The "Combined Forces Operation" artillery is shelling densely populated areas of Donbas on the other side of the line of contact. According to the SMM, four civilians were injured in 13 cases of shelling coming from Ukrainian armed forces' positions since 11 June, including in the Kuibyshevskiy district of Donetsk (11 June), Kirovsk (14 June) and Zholobok (17 June). Homes and schools were damaged in Dokuchaievsk (12 and 14 June), Kominternove (12, 14, 15, 16 June), Krasnyi Partizan (12 June), Donetsk (12 June), Holubivske (14 June) and Mikhailivka (16 June). The SMM repeatedly confirmed incidents involving interception of its unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) over territory along the line of contact under the control of the Ukrainian armed forces, in violation of the Minsk agreements.

The Ukrainian forces continue sabotaging commitments to withdraw forces and hardware. The local ceasefire in Stanytsia Luhanska has lasted close to a month now, from 23 May, but the Ukrainian armed forces are not beginning disengagement. Ukrainian armed forces personnel remain in the disengagement areas in Zolote and Petrivske. At the meeting of the Normandy Quartet foreign ministers, we drew attention to the Ukrainian Government's violation of the relevant framework decision of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) of 21 September 2016.

Ukraine is building up additional offensive military capability along the line of contact. Between 12 and 19 June, the SMM spotted 53 pieces of Ukrainian armed forces

heavy weaponry in violation of the Package of Measures and 151 pieces of weaponry just behind the withdrawal lines.

The situation with the Donetsk filtration station (DFS) remains complicated. The Ukrainian armed forces maintain fortified positions in close proximity to this crucial infrastructure site. Unfortunately, treacherous accusations against the Donbas militia that it was they who first moved in closer to the DFS are only fuelling the armed confrontation.

Against this backdrop of a serious situation in the region, it is a welcome development that several United Nations humanitarian agencies have registered in Donbas, including UNICEF, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the International Organization for Migration. In Luhansk, this list also includes the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

We again urge the Ukrainian authorities to heed the signals sent at the Normandy Quartet foreign ministers' meeting in Berlin on 11 June and the TCG meetings, including the latest meeting on 13 June. The urgent measures for a ceasefire proposed by the SMM Chief Monitor, Ertuğrul Apakan, should be worked through. We expect that the Ukrainian authorities will publish orders to not use weapons and not return fire, and will confirm their obligations under the existing agreements, end attempts at offensive operations and not conduct commando actions. Added to this should be strict compliance with the ceasefire regime, swift disengagement of forces and hardware, withdrawal of heavy equipment, demining and the end of live-fire exercises near the line of contact.

Steps in this direction would help to de-escalate tension in eastern Ukraine.

The idea of Donbas as a “cancerous tumour on the body of Ukraine” – until recently a marginal view – seems to be winning over ever more supporters in the Ukrainian Government. This can only be explained by the Ukrainian authorities' stubborn refusal to implement their political commitments under the Minsk Package of Measures. Isolating Donbas and attempts to reintegrate it by force are a road to Ukraine's self-destruction. The peaceful alternative lies in full and comprehensive implementation of the Minsk agreements with the foreseen guarantees ensuring the rights and lawful interests of the people of Donbas. We call on the Ukrainian Government to incorporate into the Law on Special Status for Certain Areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk Regions the “Steinmeier formula”, which links the holding of local elections in Donbas and the entry into force of the law itself. For close to two years now, the Ukrainian authorities have stubbornly avoided implementing the commitments made at the Normandy format summit in Paris on 2 October 2015 and reaffirmed in Berlin on 19 October 2016. There is also a need to step up talks on the political aspects of the Minsk agreements, such as the law on elections, amending the Constitution, and carrying out an amnesty.

So far, the Ukrainian authorities show no willingness to engage in serious dialogue within the TCG on breaking the deadlock in the Minsk process, especially now that the presidential election campaign has essentially already started in Ukraine.

Ukrainian news reports are ever more reminiscent of roundups of military operations around the country. There are explosions and shooting far beyond eastern Ukraine. On 14 June, four minors were seriously injured by an explosive device in the Svyatoshinsky district in Kyiv. There was an uncontrolled spread of arms throughout the country after army

and police depots were seized during the Maidan events, and now arms supplied by Western countries have joined this flow too. There are no guarantees that weapons will not spread beyond Ukraine's borders.

Against this backdrop, the impunity afforded to radicals in Ukraine looks ever more dangerous. In its attempts to consolidate society around an ideology of hatred for all things Russian, the Ukrainian Government indulges the crimes of Ukrainian nationalists. Amnesty International, Front Line Defenders, Human Rights Watch and Freedom House, in an open letter to the Ukrainian Interior Minister and Ukrainian Prosecutor General, published on 14 June, noted the activities of nationalist groups such as C14, Right Sector, Tradition and Order, and Karpatska Sich. The human rights activists concluded with all good reason that the radicals' impunity suggests that they are acting with the authorities' consent. The letter urges the Ukrainian Government to publicly condemn radical ideas, investigate the nationalists' crimes and bring the guilty to justice. This is a further signal to the SMM to step up the preparation of a thematic report on radical nationalism, neo-Nazism, extremism and xenophobia in Ukraine.

The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine also notes the rise of aggressive nationalism in its reports. In its 22nd quarterly report presented in Geneva on 20 June, it confirmed that the Ukrainian authorities are using the radical groups C14 and National Corps to carry out law enforcement functions. It also notes the security forces' responsibility for a large number of cases of arbitrary detention, torture, ill-treatment and sexual violence. It draws attention to the upsurge in violence against media workers (21 attacks and 71 violations of media freedom were registered between 16 February and 15 May). It also notes the emergence of a new Internet resource, Parazyt Centre, which, like the Mirotvorets website, is engaged in persecuting journalists. But the report also wrongfully includes assessments of the situation in Russian Crimea, which is outside the Monitoring Mission's mandate.

Ukrainian nationalists are undergoing a transformation from a tool for using force in street democracy to shaping Government policy. Their political clout is growing. Various political forces compete to win the radicals' loyalty and are ready to pay for their support.

The ideology of ethnocide forms the foundation of the Law on Education, which the nationalists so ardently support. The Ukrainian Government is not only ignoring its international obligations in this area but also the international community's warnings. The Law on Education, like the repealing of the Law on the Foundations of State Linguistic Policy, directly violates Ukraine's OSCE commitments and the Minsk Package of Measures, which provides for linguistic self-determination in Donbas.

The Ukrainian authorities continue stifling the voices of those who oppose their policies. Along with intimidation of dissenters, the authorities use their entire repressive arsenal. They persecute journalists who attempt to report objectively on developments in the country. Just recently, the Ukrainian Security Service ordered the blocking of 181 information resources. They were apparently considered to be ideologically harmful to the current authorities. Chief Editor of RIA Novosti Ukraine, Kirill Vyshinsky, remains in custody. The court proceedings are being delayed, even though Mr. Vyshinsky's health has worsened because he cannot follow doctors' medical prescriptions in prison. We call for his immediate release. The Ukrainian authorities are punishing him for his professional activity.

Persecution of Russians from Crimea continues. Elena Odnovol, director of the regional branch of the Russian organization Volunteers of Victory, has been in custody since 23 April on absurd charges.

Using a mythical “Russian aggression” as an ideological pretext, the Ukrainian authorities are drifting ever further from the tasks of restoring society’s harmony and the State’s territorial integrity. We firmly believe that only the Minsk Package of Measures, endorsed by a UN Security Council resolution, provides a viable foundation for settling the crisis in Ukraine. Our common task is to ensure that the parties to the conflict – the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk – implement it in full through direct dialogue, as the Minsk agreements stipulate.

Thank you for your attention.