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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1210th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

20 December 2018

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation in Ukraine is deteriorating. As the year 2018 draws to a close, it is regrettable that this was for the authorities in Kyiv another year of missed opportunities to resolve the protracted crisis. Carried away by military preparations and the “battle for survival” ahead of the election with the support of radical nationalists, the leadership of Ukraine finds itself dangerously teetering on the brink of the unleashing of a new spiral of violence across the country, jeopardizing, amongst other things, the security of the region.

Over the past few months, there has been a noticeable strengthening of military positions in Donbas, personnel have been rotated and the Ukrainian armed forces’ supplies replenished. Against the background of the “creeping offensive”, the security zone has continued to be pumped full with equipment and ammunition. The representatives of Donetsk have already drawn attention to the fact that the Ukrainian armed forces have amassed at least 12,000 troops near Mariupol and at least 20,000 troops near Horlivka, which could be used to conduct offensive operations at any time. Heavy weaponry belonging to the Ukrainian security forces, including Uragan and Grad multiple-launch rocket systems, large-calibre artillery, and Buk and S-300 surface-to-air missile systems, has been deployed near the line of contact. On 16 December, Su-25 fighter aircraft were moved to the Berdyansk airfield from Melitopol.

For more than two weeks now, martial law has been in force in almost half of the regions of the country, including Donbas. Hiding behind the rhetoric about preparations to repel supposed “Russian aggression”, Petro Poroshenko admitted (at a meeting with student activists in Dnipro on 17 December) that it is being used for the redeployment and transfer of units of the Ukrainian armed forces to the south-east of the country and for their continued combat (and I emphasize the word “combat”) training. A few days ago, the commander of the “Combined Forces Operation” Serhiy Nayeв inspected the combat readiness of the Ukrainian units involved in the military operation in Donbas. He also visited the port of Mariupol, where there are Ukrainian naval vessels, which are obviously ready to cover ground offensive

operations from the sea. Mr. Poroshenko has already announced that he will extend martial law, which ends on 26 December, in the event of the start of full-scale hostilities. Now the Ukrainian leadership is clearly looking for a way to achieve this. New provocations are possible. We urge the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) to step up its monitoring along the line of contact and in the rest of the country, and promptly report any signs that the Ukrainian Government is preparing for military operations.

It is astonishing that in these circumstances some Western countries are increasing their military, technical and advisory support to the Ukrainian Government. As part of the training co-operation programme with the Ukrainian armed forces, some 450 military instructors from seven NATO countries are working in Ukraine, and shipments of lethal weapons continue to be delivered. Just the other day, the Special Representative of the United States of America for Ukraine, Kurt Volker, visited Kyiv and announced new arms deliveries to Ukraine.

Ukraine is also promised assistance from the United States in the implementation of the naval strategy developed for it by that country, including the development of infrastructure and the re-equipping of the navy. There have been reports in the media about the preparation of a similar strategy for the Ukrainian air force. Personnel from the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment of the Tennessee Army National Guard, who train Ukrainian armed forces' units to be sent to Donbas in the Yavoriv training area, conducted two-week "field exercises" with Ukrainian schoolchildren.

All this merely encourages hotheads within the leadership of Ukraine to undertake new reckless adventures. Their illusion of impunity is being strengthened. It is important to realize that part of the responsibility for possible casualties and destruction will lie with those who supplied deadly weapons to Ukraine and have in essence funded the war.

Against the background of the Ukrainian Government's increasing military activity, the representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk region to the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) appealed to the international community to prevent provocative actions on the part of Ukraine. According to them, sabotage at one of the major industrial plants near the line of contact could be used as a pretext for the resumption of large-scale combat operations in Donbas.

An agreement on additional measures for de-escalation, including the prohibition of sabotage, offensive action, and the shelling of residential districts and civilian infrastructure facilities, needs to be secured without delay. In that regard, the past week has not been a peaceful one. According to the SMM, over 1,200 ceasefire violations were recorded. As a result of shelling by the Ukrainian security forces on the outskirts of Donetsk and Luhansk, the monitors noted damage to apartment buildings in Antratsyt, Dokuchaievsk and also in Slovianoserbsk, where a local woman was injured. We remind you of the ever increasing need for a new thematic report by the SMM on civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian infrastructure.

There is still no progress in the implementation of the Framework Decision of 21 September 2016 on Disengagement of Forces and Hardware. The Ukrainian Government blocked this process in Stanytsia Luhanska, using the unfavourable security situation that it is itself creating to justify its inaction. Ukrainian security forces have violated the status quo

that existed following the disengagement in Petrivske and Zolote, returning to the disengagement areas and strengthening their positions there.

It is impossible to complete the disengagement and achieve the sustainable ceasefire envisaged by the Minsk Package of Measures because of the unwillingness of the Ukrainian leadership to abandon its coercive pressure on Donbas. Yesterday's (19 December) TCG meeting in Minsk once again confirmed the Ukrainian Government's lack of political will for a peaceful settlement on the basis of the Package of Measures. Despite the insistent calls by the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Martin Sajdik, and the Chief Monitor of the SMM, Ertuğrul Apakan, the Ukrainian negotiators backtracked on agreeing on a date for declaring the Christmas/New Year ceasefire, referring to the fact that Ukraine was currently in a state of martial law. Donetsk and Luhansk, on the other hand, were prepared to do this. Against this background, the Ukrainian Government is also stubbornly avoiding a substantive discussion on the political aspects (in particular, on an amnesty, the special status and constitutional reform). They refuse to set out on paper the Steinmeier formula, which was approved twice by the leaders of the Normandy Quartet, at the summits in 2015 and 2016.

We cannot ignore the Ukrainian Government's encroachment on fundamental human rights and freedoms, the muzzling of dissent and the encouragement of extremist and neo-Nazi sentiments. The Ukrainian authorities' actions only intensify the existing contradictions and lead to a further polarization of society. Their combination with military preparations is cause for particular concern.

They are trying to change Ukrainian society, its traditions and foundations by force to accommodate the geopolitical goals of others. An example of this is the blatant meddling by the "Maidan authorities" in the religious life of the country. The unprecedented pressure by the authorities on the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, its clergy and parishioners not only widens the already painful divide in Ukrainian orthodoxy, but also lays the foundations for sectarian violence. Proclaiming the creation of a new church, Petro Poroshenko suggested that orthodox Ukrainians make, I quote, a "conscious choice between Ukraine and Russia". Against this backdrop, the authorities are condoning attacks on the clergy of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, using political reasons to justify this.

Life in an atmosphere of fear is being imposed on the country. The personal details of a number of members of the clergy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, including its head, Onufriy, Metropolitan of Kyiv and all Ukraine, have been included in the database of the Mirotvorets extremist website, which calls for reprisals against the "enemies of Ukraine". A few days ago, a Verkhovna Rada deputy, the odious nationalist Dmytro Yarosh, called for a hunt to begin for "Moscow priests" (which is how he referred to representatives of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church). At the same time, the Ukrainian Security Service announced in the press that the abbot of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, Metropolitan Pavel (Lebed), whose apartment had been searched by the Ukrainian intelligence services a few days earlier, would be called in for questioning. The Ukrainian Security Service has also begun to publish propaganda brochures about the alleged involvement of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the "hybrid war against Ukraine". What is this if not direct incitement to religious hatred?

We have noted the joint statement on the results of the fifth Association Council meeting between the European Union and Ukraine on 18 December, at which they discussed the need to fully implement the recommendations by the Council of Europe's Venice Commission on the Ukrainian Law on Education and ensure respect for the rights of national

minorities, as enshrined in United Nations and Council of Europe conventions and related protocols. In the meantime, we are seeing the situation take a completely different turn. In fact, the leadership of Ukraine continues its policy of forced Ukrainization, putting unprecedented pressure on millions of Russian-speaking citizens. The Verkhovna Rada has rejected all the amendments proposed by its deputies to the current Law on Education intended to bring Article 7 of that law into line with the Venice Commission's recommendations. Last week, the regional councils of two predominantly Russian-speaking regions – Kherson (13 December) and Kharkiv (14 December) – decided to revoke their own decisions guaranteeing the right to use the Russian language and recognizing it as a regional language.

Language is not the only aspect of the policy of forced Ukrainization developed by the Kyiv authorities on the basis of their rabid Russophobia. The Ukrainian authorities have opted to pander to the demands of the most radical segments of society. The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine has declared the birthday of the nationalist Stepan Bandera a public holiday in 2019. Officials will now be able to join the torchlit processions by neo-Nazis that have become a tradition on that day, and special lessons will be held in schools prior to and following that anniversary. Even more absurdly, Petro Poroshenko has announced a witch-hunt and instructed the Ukrainian Security Service to check whether officials have family ties with people in Russia, promising to take appropriate personnel decisions on the basis of the results.

On 15 December, our country held a day of remembrance for journalists killed in the line of duty. On that day, we once again remembered the Russian and foreign journalists who have lost their lives in Ukraine. Over the past four years, two dozen employees of various media outlets have been killed in Ukraine. They include Anatoly Klyan, Anton Voloshin, Igor Kornelyuk, Andrei Stenin, Andrea Rocchelli, Oles Buzina, Sergei Dolgov, Vyacheslav Veremiy and Pavel Sheremet. Unfortunately, the majority of these murders remain unsolved to this day. The problem of not bringing to justice those responsible for attacks on journalists was also noted by UN experts in their report of 17 December analysing freedom of the media in Ukraine.

We must also not forget about those journalists who have suffered unjust persecution. The editor-in-chief of RIA Novosti Ukraine, Kirill Vyshinsky, remains in custody on trumped-up charges. Many Ukrainian journalists who dared to express an alternative point of view to the official one have been forced to leave the country because of pressure and threats.

Mr. Chairperson,

Ukraine needs to abide by its commitments. The Minsk Package of Measures endorsed by UN Security Council resolution 2202 remains the basic framework for the settlement of the crisis in Ukraine. It is important to finally recognize the extreme danger posed to regional stability by support for the hotheads in Kyiv. We urge reasonable countries in Europe to use all the influence available to them to rule out the possibility of new provocations and prevent another spiral of violence fraught with unpredictable consequences.

Thank you for your attention.