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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1219th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 March 2019

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation in Ukraine remains worrying. The New Year/Christmas truce in Donbas did not last long, and the level of ceasefire violations has returned to what it was before the truce was announced. The Ukrainian armed forces are stepping up their shelling, using artillery and mortars, notably in residential areas. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) has reported an increase in the use of large-calibre weapons.

Over the past week, two local residents were killed as a result of shelling in certain areas of Donbas: an elderly woman in Horlivka on 1 March and a male civilian in Sakhanka on 4 March. This information was confirmed and made public by the local authorities; however, it has not as yet been reflected in the SMM's reports. I might add that the man killed in Sakhanka lived on Constitution Street. There is tragic symbolism here in that exactly five years ago the Constitution of Ukraine was in fact trampled underfoot by radical Ukrainian nationalists. Having carried out an anti-constitutional coup d'état and seized power, they gave the orders for troops to be sent in against the inhabitants of south-eastern Ukraine who disagreed with these developments. This civil war continues to this day.

Last week brought fresh destruction. In addition to the northern outskirts of Donetsk and residential buildings in certain localities, a functioning school building in Sakhanka, which has already been mentioned, came under fire from Ukrainian army positions, and the SMM recorded the damage caused there. It was sheer luck that the children were on holiday at the time and thus were not injured. We urge the SMM not to drag out the publication of its thematic report on civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure facilities. This is extremely important for understanding what is happening in Donbas. Otherwise, it will look like the Mission is hiding the facts from the international community.

The situation around the Donetsk filtration station and the Vasylivka pumping station has deteriorated. Shots are regularly fired at the staff of these critical civilian infrastructure facilities. In its report dated 5 March, the SMM talks about repairs carried out to a gas

pipeline near the village of Krasnyi Partyzan. At the same time, there is no information in the Mission's reports about the mortar shelling of the village that preceded the repair work and that in fact caused the damage to the gas distribution station located there. As a result, some 600 households were left without gas for quite some time.

The Ukrainian Government is increasing its military presence in Donbas and moving equipment and weapons into the region. The SMM continues to report the transfer of Ukrainian tanks and heavy artillery by rail. Most of these movements over the past week were observed in the Donetsk region. For example, 32 T-64 tanks were recorded at Zachativka railway station on 26 February, 24 tanks of the same type at the station in Bakhmut (formerly Artemivsk) on 3 March, and 24 tanks once again at Zachativka station on 4 March. You do not have to be a military expert to understand that a massing of tanks near the line of contact is evidence, among other things, that some consideration is being given to the option of offensive action.

Against this backdrop, Ukraine continues to sabotage the implementation of the Framework Decision of the Trilateral Contact Group on Disengagement of Forces and Hardware in Stanytsia Luhanska, Petrivske and Zolote. Once again, the SMM notes fortified positions belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces inside the disengagement area in Zolote, where a BMP-1 armoured infantry fighting vehicle was spotted again on 26 February.

A week ago (27 February), the representatives of Ukraine at the meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk refused to resume their commitments to a ceasefire and reach an agreement on another "spring truce". Today, during a videoconference, the parties agreed verbally to an indefinite ceasefire beginning at 00.01 hours on 8 March, the text of which is to be agreed upon later. We trust that this agreement will be respected.

The current Ukrainian leadership has been so carried away with fighting to stay in power that it has forgotten all about a political settlement. The Ukrainian Government's actions only serve to exacerbate the current tensions. It seems that the authorities are deluding themselves that historical myth-making, rhetoric about "aggressors" and a policy of reshaping religious life in the country for their opportunistic political needs will help them to consolidate their position. Why do they need all of this? Obviously so as not to lose the support of the West given their own political bankruptcy.

Radical nationalism continues to rage across Ukraine. What is more, the Ukrainian authorities are completely pandering to the nationalists and even encouraging them. On 3 March, a horrendous act of vandalism was committed in Lviv in western Ukraine, insulting historical memory. A stela forming part of a large memorial ensemble in honour of the victory over Nazism was destroyed under the cover of night at the instigation of the local authorities. This was already the third demolition attempt: the previous two attempts were unsuccessful, although the authorities had also claimed that the stela was allegedly unsafe. Also telling in this regard was the video footage of a swastika symbol on a staircase in a shopping mall in Kyiv on 16 February. What is happening in Ukraine can be described, perhaps, only in the terms of the well-known "Hegel's paradox": "History teaches us that man learns nothing from history." We once again recall the need to prepare a thematic report on the manifestations of radical nationalism, neo-Nazism and xenophobia in Ukraine.

In line with the Ukrainian Government's directives, local authorities in quite a number of regions are, under the guise of supposed concern about national identity,

increasingly pursuing a campaign to appropriate places of worship belonging to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC). The situation is most worrying in central and western Ukraine.

Members of the radical organization “C14” are also playing an active role in the appropriation of UOC churches. In January alone they were involved in the appropriation of no less than three churches – in the village of Shandrovets (Lviv region) on 16 January and in the village of Olenivka and the village of Kovpyta (Chernihiv region) on 16 and 26 January, respectively. The comments by the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, Arsen Avakov, on 1 March are noteworthy in this regard. He said that the Ministry of Internal Affairs had recorded co-operation between “C14” radicals and the Security Service of Ukraine, who, as he put it, were “in cahoots” with one another and had carried out some “very unseemly deeds”.

In this context, let us recall once again the references made by the esteemed Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the OSCE to the assurances by the President of Ukraine that the State would not interfere in the activities of the Church, and that the authorities allegedly would respect the choice of those who remained faithful to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. These were, unfortunately, merely empty words.

The harassment of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and of its faithful and clergy, requires particular attention on the part of the OSCE. We are counting on principled public assessments and specific steps by the OSCE Chairmanship, the Secretary General, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the special representative for protecting the rights of Christians and, of course, the SMM. We recall that the Mission’s mandate does not provide for passive monitoring of the human rights situation, but for supporting respect for these rights. We consider it necessary to call on the SMM to prepare an appropriate thematic report on the situation regarding the UOC.

The persecution of journalists also continues. The editor of the RIA Novosti Ukraine news portal, Kirill Vyshinsky, remains in custody on politically motivated charges. Now the Ukrainian Security Service has clamped down on the opposition journalist and analyst Vladimir Skachko. His apartment was searched on 5 March, and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir, and the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine have already voiced their concern in connection with this matter.

Mr. Chairperson,

While the Ukrainian authorities are wasting their efforts and resources on rewriting history, harassing the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, waging a battle against the Russian language and suppressing dissent, the country is facing serious problems that are gathering momentum and pose a direct threat to European security, namely organized crime, drug trafficking, and the illegal trade in arms and explosives.

According to the Ukrainian authorities’ estimates, the total number of unrecorded and unregistered weapons in the country currently amounts to 5 million units. A black market for weapons is flourishing too. On 2 March, military personnel who were selling ammunition and had managed to sell some 40 kg of explosives were detained in the Rivne region. One can only guess how many cases of this kind have not been given a legal assessment.

The drug situation is also deteriorating. According to reports by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in recent years Ukraine has become an important link in the drug trafficking chain from Central Asia and the Middle East to Europe. One of the main directions for the transshipment of drugs from Ukraine is to Romania, from where they are dispersed across European Union territory. One does not have to look far for examples – three days ago (4 March), a car carrying 84 kg of heroin drove unhindered across the Ukrainian-Romanian border into Romanian territory. The cargo and the two people transporting it were detained by Romanian law enforcement officers.

Mr. Chairperson,

Raging radical nationalism and organized crime, which represents a direct danger to the countries surrounding Ukraine, is fuelled in many respects by the actions and rhetoric of the Ukrainian Government in Donbas. In the interests of our entire European continent, the Ukrainian Government's military operations against its own citizens in south-eastern Ukraine must be stopped as soon as possible and the situation in Ukraine in general stabilized. All the opportunities for a settlement are set out in the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, which was endorsed by the UN Security Council. We call for as much pressure as possible to be exerted on the Ukrainian authorities to encourage the Ukrainian Government to implement in full the provisions of the Minsk Package of Measures through responsible and direct dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk.

Thank you for your attention.