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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1230th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

30 May 2019

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The past week has not brought any major changes in Donbas. This situation remains tense. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) continues to record violations of the ceasefire regime and the use of weapons prohibited under the Minsk agreements. The Ukrainian armed forces are still firing on towns and villages in Donbas – destruction of residential buildings was again reported in Dokuchaievsk and Zolote-5/Mykhailivka. According to the information contained in the Mission’s reports on the direction of fire, the number of cases in which the Ukrainian armed forces opened fire was considerably higher than the figures for the militia this past week.

The visit by the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyi on 28 May to Donbas and the line of contact did not result in “complete calm” being established there. There have been no public orders for a ceasefire either. The expectations of millions of people who voted against the militaristic policy of the previous administration meanwhile remain just that – expectations. It is now that the new leadership of Ukraine has the chance to give fresh impetus to the entire settlement process through its actions and to help defuse the situation in Donbas.

Real de-escalation is needed. The only way to achieve this is by ensuring a ceasefire and the withdrawal of equipment in accordance with the Minsk Package of Measures, along with disengagement of forces and demining, as stipulated in the decisions of the Trilateral Contact Group. Meanwhile, the Government of the United States of America continues its dangerous course of militarizing Ukraine. According to US media, one third of the 300 million US dollars pledged in the Pentagon’s draft budget for the 2020 financial year for military aid to Ukraine will go on the procurement of “lethal weapons”. We were puzzled by the words of the US Special Representative for Ukraine, Kurt Volker, at a briefing in Brussels on 28 May, namely that “Ukraine has fulfilled its part of the Minsk agreements.” We recall that so far only Point 13 of the Minsk Package of Measures (on the establishment of working groups in Minsk) has been implemented in full. Everything else is at an impasse, and the Ukrainian Government is to blame.

During his trip to Donbas, Mr. Zelenskyi visited Stanytsia Luhanska, where for more than two and a half years the Ukrainian armed forces have been sabotaging the disengagement of forces and hardware. He visited the Ukrainian security forces’ positions, which should have been removed a long time ago.

Previously, the SMM confirmed dozens of times that the conditions necessary for the start of this process were being met. I would remind you that Stanytsia Luhanska, together with Petrivske and Zolote, were identified as the three pilot areas for starting implementation of the Framework Decision on Disengagement of Forces and Hardware of 21 September 2016 approved in the Trilateral Contact Group. The Ukrainian armed forces have not only blocked this process in Stanytsia Luhanska, but have also returned deep inside the Petrivske and Zolote areas after disengagement had taken place there, strengthening their positions with equipment and personnel. It is important that the new Ukrainian leadership understands that the commitments undertaken earlier by the Ukrainian Government do not cease with the departure of the previous authorities and must be honoured.

The best way of “resetting” the Minsk agreements, about which there has been increasing talk of late in Kyiv, will be to refrain from sabotage and implement in good faith the provisions of the Minsk Package of Measures in honest and direct dialogue with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk. The agreements reached in the framework of the Normandy format by the leaders of Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine on the need to synchronize efforts to solve problems in the political and security sphere are intended to facilitate this. In addition to disengagement in the three pilot areas, they envisage among the priority measures formalization in writing in the Trilateral Contact Group of the procedure for the entry into force of the law on the special status of Donbas in line with the “Steinmeier formula”. We hope that the new Ukrainian administration does not intend to cancel these agreements.

The inhumane embargo on Donbas continues. It runs counter to Point 8 of the Minsk Package of Measures, which provides for the resumption of socio-economic ties, including the reinstatement of control of the segment of the banking system in the region. Incidentally, our German and French partners in the Normandy format at one point volunteered to assist in creating an international mechanism to facilitate cash transfers to the region. However, to date there is still no possibility of conducting cashless transfers across the line of contact. The idea of organizing mobile banking services along the line of contact has not been developed any further either.

The conditions that the Ukrainian Government continues to impose on the inhabitants of Donbas wishing to receive the payments to which they are legally entitled force them to make difficult and dangerous trips across the line of contact. They spend hours queuing at checkpoints, and this costs some people their lives. The latest tragic incident occurred on 22 May at the Ukrainian checkpoint in Marinka, where a pensioner died. The SMM describes situations in which people were waiting for up to three days in territory controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces, as was recently the case in Maiorsk.

The peace process in eastern Ukraine has entered a risky stage. The cessation of the work of key Ukrainian representatives in the Trilateral Contact Group, including those who dealt with the release of detained persons, calls into question the dynamic of the entire negotiation process. Let me remind you that it was in the Minsk-based Trilateral Contact Group that a number of decisions were elaborated to facilitate de-escalation. We hope that the authorities in Kyiv are aware of the risks associated with a possible disruption of the negotiation efforts. We trust that the Ukrainian authorities will appoint their representatives as quickly as possible so that the meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk scheduled for 5 June can take place and its work can lead to practical results.

It is extremely important that in the heat of the election campaign for seats in the new Parliament the current Ukrainian leaders do not forget their responsibility to the people who voted for change and against militaristic rhetoric and aggressive attempts to isolate part of Ukrainian society. Ultimately, they voted for an end to armed confrontation and for peace in Donbas. In these circumstances, we urge the SMM to step up its monitoring efforts and carefully record all violations of the Minsk agreements. The SMM also needs to

pay close attention to other issues falling within its mandate, in particular the gross and massive violations of human rights by the Ukrainian authorities, including linguistic, educational and religious rights.

The authorities in Kyiv require a clear signal regarding the necessity to fulfil their existing commitments. Decisive and immediate steps are needed that would facilitate the implementation of the Minsk agreements as well as the agreements reached at the Normandy format summits in Paris in 2015 and Berlin in 2016.

Thank you for your attention.