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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1234th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 July 2019

**In response to the reports by the Special Representative of the OSCE
Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group,
Ambassador Martin Sajdik, and by the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring
Mission to Ukraine, Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik**

Madam Chairperson,

We are pleased to welcome Ambassador Martin Sajdik and Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik, who recently assumed the post of Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), to the OSCE Permanent Council meeting, and thank them for their reports.

Your assessments confirm that the situation in Ukraine remains unpredictable. The rise to power of new political forces in Kyiv has not yet led to a turning point in the settlement process. The total number of ceasefire violations not only shows no sign of decreasing, but in many areas is increasing noticeably. There continue to be daily skirmishes and new victims.

The bulk of the casualties among the civilian population and the destruction of civilian infrastructure continue to be reported in militia-controlled territory, which is subjected to shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces. We urge the SMM to closely monitor information on such incidents. We are awaiting the publication of a thematic report on this topic. Over the past two weeks alone, the SMM reported that a child had been injured in Horlivka, as had two local residents in Donetsk, a young man in Pervomaïsk, and pensioners in villages close to the line of contact. The Mission provided information on the consequences of the shelling of public facilities – four buildings of Children’s Municipal Hospital No. 4 in Donetsk, at which 32 children were receiving treatment, and also a cultural centre in Kominternove. The destruction of residential buildings was reported in a number of localities.

There were two incidents recently in which Russian journalists were shelled by Ukrainian security forces attacking the outskirts of Donetsk. On 27 June, correspondents from the “RIA Novosti” news agency came under fire on the western outskirts of Donetsk, and on 2 July Ukrainian soldiers fired mortars at a camera crew from the All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company (VGTRK) in the same area near Oleksandrivka.

At the meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) in Minsk on 2 July, the Ukrainian side once again avoided reaching an agreement on the latest so-called bread ceasefire, which would allow crops to be harvested in Donbas in a secure environment. According to reports from certain areas of the Donetsk region, last week, as a result of a fire in the Telmanove district caused by shelling, at least two hectares of wheat burned down and a granary was damaged.

We appreciate the SMM's efforts aimed at monitoring the disengagement of forces and hardware in Stanytsia Luhanska. The Mission confirmed the withdrawal of the Ukrainian armed forces and members of the Luhansk militia together with their weapons from positions inside the disengagement area. We trust that the positive dynamic in Stanytsia Luhanska will give an impetus to the full implementation of the Framework Decision on Disengagement of Forces and Hardware of 21 September 2016, which was agreed upon in the TCG and supported at the "Normandy format" summit in Berlin. We call on Ukraine to disengage completely in the two other areas – Petrivske and Zolote – where the Ukrainian armed forces returned immediately after the disengagement there.

We support other measures aimed at de-escalation, including those proposed by the former SMM Chief Monitor, Mr. Ertuğrul Apakan: promulgating the orders for a ceasefire, and disciplinary proceedings for those who violate them, prohibiting the deployment of weapons in residential areas and near civilian infrastructure facilities, and prohibiting reconnaissance and sabotage activity.

Mr. Sajdik,

We commend your efforts to co-ordinate the negotiations within the TCG. It is also important not to forget about the need to synchronize the solution of security issues with progress on the political track of the settlement, on which agreement was reached at the "Normandy format" summits. All of this should be reflected in the balanced work of the TCG. This work is undoubtedly dependent to a large degree on the Ukrainian Government's political will and clear strategy for a settlement and on whether the Ukrainian negotiators have real powers. The existing agreements must be implemented. I am referring, among other things, to the need for the "Steinmeier formula" regarding the entry into force of the law on the special status of Donbas to be formalized in writing in the TCG.

Mr. Çevik,

You have taken over the leadership of the Mission at a difficult time, and in this context it has a special role to play. We assume that under your leadership the SMM will continue its activities in strict accordance with the agreed mandate. The SMM should focus not only on balanced monitoring on both sides of the line of contact in Donbas, but also on the situation in the rest of the country.

Discriminatory laws in the area of language, education and religion were adopted at the initiative of the outgoing President of Ukraine. The Law of Ukraine on Ensuring the Functioning of Ukrainian as the State Language enters into force on 16 July. This law contravenes the Constitution of Ukraine and other legislative acts. It provides for coercive Ukrainization of all aspects of life, with fines being imposed for the failure to use the Ukrainian language. These measures only serve to alienate the population of Donbas and violate the rights of millions of other Russian-speaking Ukrainians. We urge the SMM to keep an eye on the consequences of the enactment of that law and to make sure that the problems associated with its application are covered in its reports. Co-ordination in these matters with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, as stipulated in the SMM mandate, is also important.

The change of power in Ukraine has not put a stop to the pressure being exerted on the clergy and parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC). At least 14 attempts to seize places of worship

belonging to the UOC have been reported to date since 20 May, including cases involving the use of physical force and the participation of members of radical nationalist organizations. There is no end to the acts of vandalism either and there have been at least eight instances of violent disturbances and attempts to steal church property. In most cases the law enforcement agencies did not intervene and simply looked on passively. We urge the SMM to carefully monitor the situation surrounding the UOC. The publication of a thematic report on manifestations of aggressive nationalism and xenophobia is long overdue.

The inhumane blockade of Donbas continues. It is this blockade coupled with the Ukrainian Government's refusal to pay pensions and social benefits on the territory of certain areas of Donbas that leads to queues at the line of contact. People, in particular the elderly, are forced to make dangerous trips to confirm their status as temporarily displaced persons, giving them the right to receive benefits. A 69-year-old pensioner died while queuing at a Ukrainian checkpoint in Stanytsia Luhanska on 22 June.

In conclusion, the last major exchange of detained persons between the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk took place in December 2017. Since then, the Ukrainian leadership has failed to show the political will for an exchange according to the principle "all for all", as stipulated in Point 6 of the Minsk Package of Measures. On 28 June, as a goodwill gesture, representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions handed over four Ukrainian military personnel to the Ukrainian authorities. We trust that this gesture will encourage the Ukrainian Government to step up the relevant negotiations in Minsk.

Ambassadors Sajdik and Çevik,

Do you know how great the desire of the people of Donbas for peace is? Over the years of conflict, people have indeed grown tired of the war. The current situation calls for redoubled efforts to facilitate direct dialogue between the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk with a view to implementing the provisions of the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, which was endorsed by the United Nations Security Council, in full and in a co-ordinated manner.

Thank you for your attention.