

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/1478/21  
24 September 2021  
ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE  
1336th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 September 2021

**On the deteriorating situation in Ukraine and the continued non-implementation by the  
Ukrainian authorities of the Minsk agreements**

Madam Chairperson,

We are once again compelled to emphasize that the situation in Ukraine is deteriorating amid the sabotaging by that country's authorities of their obligations under the Minsk agreements. The direction of travel is clear: against a backdrop of assertions about the alleged impossibility of implementing the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, the Ukrainian leadership is seeking to "freeze" all the opportunities for a political settlement while carrying on at the same time with its military activities in Donbas. Even though the number of daily ceasefire violations is not in the thousands but in the hundreds, every such exchange of fire imperils the lives and health of civilians.

On 21 September, the International Day of Peace, established by the United Nations, was observed – a day of renouncing violence and ceasing hostilities. On that same day, as reported by the municipal authorities of Yasynuvata, which is located within "certain areas of the Donetsk region", no fewer than 15 mortar shells with a calibre of 120 mm rained down on that city. Impact sites were recorded on the premises of Vocational School No. 69 as a result of the shelling; a gas pipeline was damaged. The pupils of nearby Boarding School No. 14 were forced to take refuge in a shelter. Images of this were all over the media. We count on the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) to promptly inspect the scene of the incident and to study and report on the consequences of the aforementioned shelling.

As stated by the representatives of Donetsk, the attempts to activate a co-ordination mechanism for the ceasefire have been ignored by the Ukrainian side. We stress the pressing need for such a mechanism to be "configured" as soon as possible. We note with regret that no agreement has as yet been reached between the parties on an additional protocol to the ceasefire-strengthening measures. Discussions on this matter have been going on for a long time within the Trilateral Contact Group's Working Group on Security Issues. These discussions, by the way, continue to lead nowhere owing to the obstructionist position of the representatives of the Ukrainian Government, who, in violation of the ceasefire-strengthening measures of 22 July 2020, are avoiding contacts with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk within the current setting of the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination.

It is telling how in this context even perfunctory references to the Minsk agreements have stopped issuing from the lips of the representatives of the Ukrainian authorities. Thus, upon arriving in New York to take part in the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly, the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said that he intended to use the platform provided by that international organization, together with many others, to “look for solutions” to Donbas. He characteristically chose not to mention the solutions that had already been identified there – notably United Nations Security Council resolution 2202, adopted on 17 February 2015, which endorsed the road map for the settlement of the crisis in Ukraine, namely the Package of Measures. Nor did he refer to his commitment to full implementation of the Minsk agreements that he had avowed in the outcome document of the “Normandy format” summit of 9 December 2019. Or to his election campaign promise to the people of Ukraine that he would talk to and negotiate with anyone to ensure “that not a single life is lost”.

Almost two and a half years into Mr. Zelenskyy’s presidency, at least 20 civilians have been killed and at least 117 have been injured on both sides of the line of contact in the course of the conflict in eastern Ukraine just as a result of shelling, as reported by the SMM, while meaningful dialogue with the representatives of Donbas, as stipulated by the Minsk agreements, has not even begun.

In this regard, the findings of sociological surveys conducted in August by the Social Monitoring Center and the Razumkov Centre for Economic and Political Studies are telling. In the view of 69 per cent of the respondents, life in Ukraine had become only worse with each new President. The share of respondents feeling that events in the country were heading in the wrong direction is high, namely around 73 per cent.

Significantly, over a half of the Ukrainians surveyed (around 53 per cent) are convinced that implementation of the Minsk agreements is in the interests of Ukraine. Approximately just as many (51 per cent) were in favour of Mr. Zelenskyy engaging with the representatives of certain areas of Donbas in order to settle the conflict in the east of the country. It is also remarkable that only around 14 per cent of the Ukrainians surveyed took a positive view of the policy currently being pursued by the sitting President.

All in all, after more than seven years of conflict, the key issue in the settlement process – namely safeguarding the rights of the residents of Donbas, including their linguistic rights – is not even close to being resolved. Donbas has not been granted the special status provided for by the Minsk agreements. Resolution No. 795-IX, adopted by the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) in July 2020, which rules out the possibility of holding local elections in Donbas on the basis of the Minsk agreements, remains in force. Moreover, the Government has developed and, in August of this year, submitted to the Verkhovna Rada a draft law on a so-called “transition period”, which makes a political settlement in accordance with the Package of Measures utterly impossible.

Other discriminatory laws that run counter to the provisions of the Minsk Package have been adopted and have come into effect – on education and on the State language, for example. Not to mention their discrepancies with the clauses of the country’s Constitution or the way that they violate numerous international obligations of Ukraine. And all this is taking place amid attempts to forget about Donbas altogether and distract Ukrainians with talk about some imaginary “external aggression” instead of tackling pressing problems.

During that same period of just over seven years, while the previous and current leaders of Ukraine have been ducking out of implementation of the Minsk agreements in good faith, the militarization of the country has proceeded apace. Since 2014 the numerical strength of the Ukrainian armed forces has increased by almost 60 per cent, while military spending has more than quadrupled and now stands at around 6 per cent of the country’s gross domestic product. The external “handlers” of post-Maidan Ukraine have

zealously thrown themselves into this militarization process, pumping the country full of ever new lethal weapons, ammunition and military equipment. The latest exercise involving foreign military personnel and military equipment has got under way in Ukraine this week.

Critics of the powers that be who have the “audacity” to point to the need to implement the Minsk agreements in letter and in spirit are neutralized. One need only look at the history of criminal proceedings against prominent public and political figures in this year alone, for example. The platforms through which they expressed their opinions are, incidentally, also being liquidated. Combating “undesirable” media outlets has been elevated to the rank of official policy. Non-State media resources relaying a point of view that differs from that of the authorities are at once branded as accomplices of the “aggressor” and driven out of the information space. Unprecedented pressure is put on them, including the realization of threats to shut them down. This often takes the form of extrajudicial punishment.

The latest example illustrating the authorities’ actions to purge the information space is the initiation by the National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting of the process to have the licence of the television channel Nash revoked. On this occasion, the authorities brought an action to that end in the Kyiv district administrative court, which instituted proceedings on 22 September. This happened after an unscheduled inspection of the television channel – the fourth such inspection this year. Simultaneously, the National Council authorized extraordinary inspections of the television channels Inter and Pervy Nezavisimy. We call on the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Teresa Ribeiro, to pay the closest attention to this brutal censorship. The measures taken by the Ukrainian authorities to systematically persecute “undesirable” outlets require a proper response by the OSCE.

In closing, we would stress that the path to normalization of the situation in Ukraine consists in renouncing the methods for military and non-military suppression of dissent employed by that country’s authorities. A truly inclusive and meaningful nationwide dialogue is essential. We are convinced that the conflict in eastern Ukraine can and must be settled through the implementation in good faith of all the provisions of the Package of Measures as the sole framework for achieving sustainable peace in Donbas.

Thank you for your attention.