

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1110th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The growing tension in south-eastern Ukraine is a cause of serious concern. According to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), the situation along the entire line of contact has deteriorated sharply following an unsuccessful attempt by tanks to break through to Debaltseve on 29 July. The number of hotspots has increased. The shelling of towns and villages in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions has intensified. According to the SMM's estimates, between 12 and 19 July, Donetsk, Horlivka, Staromykhailivka and other towns controlled by the militia were subjected to shelling on 14 occasions from the directions where Ukrainian armed forces' positions are located. Civilian casualties are the most alarming sign of escalation. A local resident was killed during an attack on Staromykhailivka, and people were wounded in Zaitseve, Donetsk and Stanytsia Luhanska.

Ukrainian forces and equipment are massing in the security zone where SMM monitors have reported the appearance of Ukrainian military aircraft (a Mi-8 helicopter flying over Biletske and a Mi-24 flying over Krasnohorivka) and of volunteer battalions (Right Sector in Shchastia). Rear units of the Ukrainian army are being reinforced (the SMM discovered a depot near Mariupol, in which over 323 rockets for Grad multiple-launch rocket systems were stored).

The monitors have trouble moving freely on both sides of the line of contact. Even Ukrainian representatives of the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC) restrict the movement of the monitors on territory controlled by the Ukrainian Government. On 15 July, a Ukrainian JCCC officer prevented monitors of a "certain nationality" from approaching a bridge across the Siverskyi Donets River near Stanytsia Luhanska.

Monitors regularly visit the segment of the border that is not controlled by the Ukrainian Government. This week, the SMM visited the border crossing points at Marynivka, Ulianivske, Dolzhanskyi, Chervonopartyzansk, Izvarino, Novoborovytsi and Uspenka. They

did not see any military movements there and reported a stream of Ukrainian civilians entering the Russian Federation to buy food. This is further proof of the plight of the Donbas residents, who have been brought to the brink of a humanitarian disaster by the Ukrainian Government.

The problem still lies in the Ukrainian Government's reluctance to honour the Minsk agreements in full and adhere to the sequence of actions stipulated by them. We would remind you that the main task in accordance with the Minsk Package of Measures is direct dialogue between the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk on all aspects of a settlement. There is still no sign of such willingness on the part of the Ukrainian Government.

The military confrontation needs to be stopped as soon as possible. The agreement as quickly as possible in the Trilateral Contact Group on demilitarized zones and the initial disengagement of the parties' forces should be an important first step towards de-escalating the situation at the line of contact. There need to be guarantees that violence will not resume and that there will not be a repeat of the situation in Shyrokyne, which was unilaterally demilitarized by the militia and then occupied by the Ukrainian security forces.

If there is to be a sustainable settlement, the measures to stabilize the military situation need to be synchronized with the implementation of the political aspects of the Package of Measures. It is necessary to draft a new constitution in co-ordination with Donbas and to formalize the region's permanent special status in that document. It is important that the amnesty law enters into force, but a real amnesty law, rather than one applying only to the participants in the punitive operation and running counter to the Minsk agreements. It is time finally to start working seriously on a law on local elections. As long as the Ukrainian Government does not take action in the political field, all discussions are simply pointless.

It would seem that the current authorities in Kyiv are not interested in resolving the internal Ukrainian conflict. They view the war in Donbas as a convenient pretext on which various domestic policy setbacks can be blamed and which can be used as a smokescreen to conceal the Ukrainian leadership's unwillingness to fulfil its commitments undertaken in Minsk. It looks like they don't care about the fate of Donbas civilians who are being killed by radicals and the security forces on a daily basis. The Ukrainian Government has cut them off from the banking sector, social benefits and educational and medical services, and they queue for days to cross the line of contact. Lifting all restrictions imposed by the Ukrainian Government on the freedom of movement of citizens should be a priority step in the humanitarian field. We urge that additional checkpoints be opened without delay at the line of contact, provided that appropriate security can be guaranteed.

The Ukrainian Government's human rights violations in Donbas are taking place against the background of repression of dissidents, murders of journalists, the spread of illegal weapons and the absence of results in the investigation into the Odessa tragedy and other crimes against humanity in the rest of Ukraine. Another well-known journalist, Pavel Sheremet, was killed in Kyiv yesterday, and an attempt was made on the life of the *Forbes* Ukraine editor Maria Rydvan. They were the latest victims of the system that has evolved in Ukraine today. The current Ukrainian authorities have been unable to ensure their safety, just as they failed to do the same for Georgiy Gongadze and Oles Buzina, who were brutally murdered. We are counting on an objective and thorough investigation of these crimes and the prosecution of all the guilty parties. We urge the Ukrainian Government to

guarantee compliance with the fundamental principles of international law with a view to ensuring the safety of journalists.

Thank you for your attention.