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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1318th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 June 2020

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

Madam Chairperson,

Despite their public assurances that they are committed to implementing the Minsk agreements, the Ukrainian authorities do not let up in their attempts to revise the blueprint defined in Minsk that sets out actions for resolving the conflict in the east of the country. The goal is not being hidden: it is to establish military control over the territory of Donbas without granting the population the political guarantees provided for in the Package of Measures.

It was on the “return of territory”, not the implementation of the political provisions of the Minsk Package, that the head of Ukraine’s delegation to the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), Leonid Kravchuk, discoursed in some remarks he made to the UNN (Ukrainian National News) news agency on 1 June. He also called for the Minsk and Normandy formats to be expanded: in their current state, as he argued, they could not help to resolve the conflict. The same attitude was recently expressed by President Zelenskyy as well. Moreover, in Kyiv calls are being made for the venue of TCG meetings to be changed. One might also recall the words of the Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, Andriy Yermak, who in February this year asserted that it was impossible to implement the Minsk agreements “in the version in which they exist today” and also that certain “principles” from these agreements needed to be realized. No explanation has so far been forthcoming as to what these “principles” are.

Instead of substantive work on implementing the Minsk agreements, the Ukrainian Government is trying to impose fruitless discussions about who should be regarded as parties to the conflict. And this six years after the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 2202 endorsing the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, in which it is clearly stated who is expected to fulfil obligations as part of the settlement process.

From 26 to 30 May, the OSCE Secretary General, Helga Schmid, visited Ukraine, where she spent some time in Kyiv and in the part of the territory of Donbas that is controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces. We regret that she was unable to visit Donetsk and Luhansk and assess with her own eyes the consequences there of the Ukrainian Government’s ongoing military operation. We note her efforts in support of the existing settlement mechanisms. We share her opinion that the conflict in eastern Ukraine can be resolved

solely on the basis of the Minsk agreements and in line with the implementation of the agreed conclusions under the Normandy format.

In their striving to rewrite the Minsk agreements – in which the Ukrainian Government, to the detriment of all other provisions, is prioritizing solely the point about reinstatement of control over the border – the Ukrainian authorities are keen to secure foreign backing. Thus, the Ministry of Reintegration intends this summer to present the definitive version of the draft law on the so-called transitional period. According to some remarks by the Minister for Reintegration, Oleksii Reznikov, its text is currently being scrutinized by the embassies of a number of foreign countries and will thereafter be submitted for consideration to the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. This is clearly yet another attempt to involve international partners in the Ukrainian Government's efforts to rewrite the Minsk agreements.

We would remind you that this draft law provides for the introduction of a kind of special legal regime for certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions while preserving the existing conditions of the socio-economic blockade. Before that, it is planned to establish military control over the border and the entire territory of Donbas – even though pursuant to paragraph 9 of the Package of Measures, the resolution of the border issue should be completed after a comprehensive political settlement. What is more, instead of the local elections stipulated in paragraph 4 of the Package of Measures, the draft law proposes the establishment of some sort of military and civilian administrative bodies. Lastly, instead of the amnesty for the participants in the events in Donbas provided for by paragraph 5, there is this concept of “transitional justice”, which entails the selective application of repressive instruments on the basis of politically motivated assessments by the Ukrainian Government in each specific case. Significantly, there is no mention either of a permanent special status for the region or of any kind of dialogue with its true representatives.

Against this backdrop, the military tensions persist in Donbas. According to the observations by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), despite a reduction in the number of ceasefire violations over the past few days, such violations are taking place along the entire line of contact. Damage to residential buildings has been recorded in the Donetsk region on both sides of the line.

The International Day for Protection of Children was celebrated on 1 June. Unfortunately, this population group, which is the most vulnerable in the context of an armed conflict, continues to suffer as a result of shelling by the Ukrainian military. Even children's schools are coming under fire. The SMM has on three occasions this year recorded the consequences of shelling of functioning schools. All these incidents occurred in the territory of certain areas of Donbas. In February and March, a school in Zolote 5/Mykhailivka (Luhansk region) was subjected to shelling. In May it was the turn of a school in the Petrovskiyi district of the city of Donetsk. Also in May, a 12-year-old child was injured as a result of the shelling of a residential building on the northern outskirts of Donetsk.

Alongside adults, children too are falling victim to exploding mines and the detonation of other explosive devices that have been placed in the conflict zone. In a thematic report by the SMM on civilian casualties due to mines covering the period from 1 November 2019 to 31 March 2021, there are data on how three children were killed and eight injured. In its reports for April and May the Mission confirmed that three more children have been killed and two injured. All in all, in its thematic report the SMM corroborated information indicating that 20 civilians had been killed and 56 injured. The Mission comes to the conclusion that it is impossible to clear the region comprehensively of mines in a context of non-compliance with the ceasefire.

Given the continued shelling, it is difficult to take appropriate demining measures. The ceasefire-strengthening measures are demonstrably not being complied with. Having made commitments on

these measures at the TCG, the Ukrainian Government refuses to liaise with the authorities in Donbas on the parameters for monitoring their implementation and responding to violations with the involvement of a co-ordination mechanism, as stipulated by the agreement of 22 July 2020.

Obstacles continue to be thrown up to the monitoring activities of the SMM, including the operations of its unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). The problem is especially pressing in the case of long-range UAVs, which since 21 March this year have been regularly experiencing jamming in areas controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces, notably deep behind the latter's lines. The issue of UAV operations was also highlighted by Secretary General Schmid, who visited Donbas on 28 May. We understand that the Ukrainian military provided certain security measures for this visit. Remarkably, on the day of the Secretary General's arrival at the Novotroitske checkpoint (used for crossing the line of contact), three mini-UAVs belonging to the Mission experienced jamming in that very area (report dated 29 May). Just one day before, in that same area, not only were attempts made to jam a UAV from the SMM as it flew over positions of the Ukrainian armed forces, but it was even fired at (report dated 27 May).

By the way, despite the confirmed instances of signal interference with its UAVs, the Mission seems to be unable to establish the location of the Ukrainian electronic warfare systems. For example, the last time that the Mission reported on Bukovel-AD electronic warfare systems in Donbas was a year ago, in June 2020. However, the Ukrainian Joint Forces Operation command subsequently made statements on several occasions about their being used in Donbas. We call on the Mission to intensify – not least by using ground patrols – its monitoring of the relevant areas and to reflect such information in its reports.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, including its parishioners and clergy, continues to be subjected to pressure in Ukraine. In recent reports the SMM has provided information on a confrontation that took place on 10 May between adherents of the so-called Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) and a congregation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church over ownership of a church in Zabolottia (Rivne region). We recall that the OCU was artificially created in 2018 through the efforts of the leadership of Ukraine at the time and was exploited by them in their political battles. Since then, there have been around a hundred incidents where parishioners of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church were deprived of their right to take charge of their houses of worship. Many such incidents were accompanied by violence and occurred with the support of the local authorities and the inaction of the law enforcement agencies.

One further point. The joint NATO-Ukraine exercise "Sea Breeze 2021" will take place from 28 June to 10 July, as part of which joint operations by special operations forces and Ukrainian land forces are scheduled to take place on the territory of Ukraine. Judging by the available information, it is planned to use this exercise as a cover for delivering modern weaponry, ammunition and materiel to Ukraine. Thereafter, as in previous years, the weapons will be sent to the Ukrainian armed forces and Ukrainian nationalist paramilitary units stationed near the line of contact in Donbas. We emphasize that the militarization of Ukraine and pumping the country full of weaponry will not help to establish peace in Donbas – on the contrary, the effect will be to incite the hotheads in Kyiv to new rounds of military escalation in the east of the country. We call on the SMM to monitor closely all aspects related to the conduct of the aforementioned exercise.

Once again, we note that the crisis in Ukraine is the result of the February 2014 coup d'état, which was orchestrated, funded and organized from abroad and has led to armed confrontation in Donbas and the wholesale suffering of millions of civilians. We should like to draw your attention to the Arria-formula meeting of the members of the United Nations Security Council that was held via videoconference on 2 June and was devoted to the events that took place on the Maidan in Kyiv in 2013–2014 and their implications for

Donbas. Eyewitnesses shared their testimonies and assessments of what happened. We recommend that you acquaint yourselves carefully with these materials.¹

Thank you for your attention.

1 <https://youtu.be/oi2TcQMXxTE>.