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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1015th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 September 2014

**On the situation in Ukraine and the continuing violations of the norms of
international humanitarian law during the punitive
operation in eastern Ukraine**

Mr. Chairperson,

At the recent meeting in Minsk of the Presidents of the member countries of the Customs Union, Ukraine and representatives of the European Union on 26 August, it was agreed that efforts would be made within the Trilateral Contact Group to find a universally acceptable solution to the internal Ukrainian crisis.

The Presidents of Russia and Ukraine discussed on the telephone priority action needed to put a stop to the bloodshed in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In that connection, the views of the two heads of State were very similar.

The President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, proposed that both parties to the conflict should agree on and implement the following steps. (We distributed the complete text of the proposal amongst delegations yesterday evening.)

The first step is to end active offensive operations by armed forces, armed units and militia groups in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in south-eastern Ukraine.

The second step is to withdraw Ukrainian armed forces units to a distance that would make it impossible to fire on populated areas using artillery and any type of multiple-launch rocket systems.

The third step is to provide for full and objective international monitoring of compliance with the ceasefire and monitoring of the situation in the safe zone created by the ceasefire. And it is here, as we understand, that the OSCE will have an important role to play.

The fourth step is to exclude the use of military aircraft against civilians and populated areas in the conflict zone.

The fifth step is to organize the exchange of individuals detained by force on an “all for all” basis without any preconditions.

The sixth step is to open humanitarian corridors for refugees and for delivering humanitarian cargos to towns and other populated areas in Donbas – the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

The seventh step is to make it possible for repair teams to travel to settlements in the Donbas region that have been affected by the conflict to restore and rebuild damaged social facilities and vital infrastructure and to assist these settlements.

Final agreements between Kyiv and representatives of south-eastern Ukraine could be reached and consolidated during the Contact Group meeting scheduled for 5 September.

We see this as a turning point. Mr. Putin’s initiative is aimed at helping Kyiv and south-east Ukraine to co-ordinate the steps needed to de-escalate the situation in the country. We trust that these calls will be heeded, especially in Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk. We are ready, together with the OSCE, to ensure practical steps towards de-escalation.

We expect real progress to be made at the Contact Group meeting scheduled for tomorrow. We hope that this time the United States of America and the European Union will support the efforts to secure a ceasefire and the start of substantive national dialogue.

Mr. Chairperson,

We received confirmation on 3 September that the Russian journalist Andrey Stenin, who had been missing since the beginning of August, was killed on 6 August when a militia convoy was shelled by the Ukrainian army, presumably the 79th Airmobile Brigade. The convoy came under fire from tanks using high-explosive shells and mortars. In addition to the vehicle in which Mr. Stenin was travelling, more than ten vehicles carrying civilians were destroyed.

This is a war crime. We demand that Kyiv conduct a thorough investigation into the murder of Andrey Stenin and severely punish the perpetrators. Over the last few months, Russia has lost four of its journalists in Ukraine – an unprecedented situation even when compared to other bloody armed conflicts of recent years. We trust that the international community, including the United States and European Union countries, which are so concerned about freedom of the media in other countries and different parts of the world, will bring the necessary decisive pressure to bear on Kyiv.

Kyiv’s punitive operation in eastern Ukraine is posing a mortal danger to the people of Donbas. It has already resulted in a huge number of casualties among the civilian population, and the number continues to grow. Houses, schools, hospitals and kindergartens have been destroyed as a result of being bombed by the Ukrainian army. In many towns and villages there are power cuts or no electricity at all, and water, medicine and food are all in short supply. The number of refugees and internally displaced persons continues to grow. According to data from the United Nations, the number of Ukrainians forced to flee their homes has reached 1 million. According to Russia’s Federal Migration Service, as of 2 September, over 285,000 Ukrainian citizens had officially requested asylum in Russia. Just think about how many people’s lives have been ruined.

Observers from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) confirm in their reports the catastrophic situation in Luhansk, where just over half of the population remains. We call on the SMM to continue to monitor the situation carefully and provide information without embellishing the state of affairs. Neither the observers from the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine nor international human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch, can ignore these outrageous facts any longer.

Recently, as noted by the OSCE observers, the intensity of the shelling of Donetsk and Luhansk has diminished somewhat. In some towns and villages, people are at last able to come out of their cellars and obtain basic humanitarian aid, drinking water and medicines. In some places it is possible to begin restoring critical infrastructure, and some schools have reopened.

However, Kyiv cannot take the credit for this. The militias are themselves pushing back the Ukrainian security force weapon emplacements from the towns they have been shelling. Heavy armaments and ammunition are frequently falling into the hands of the militias as trophies when Ukrainian soldiers are surrounded and taken prisoner. The territory of Donbas has become a huge arsenal of weaponry and military equipment. It is a blessing that it has been impossible to complete the so-called anti-terrorist operation, in other words kill even more people in Donetsk and Luhansk.

Nevertheless, the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine remains extremely serious. Calls for continued aid are heard from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the OSCE, the Council of Europe, United Nations humanitarian agencies and the leaders of many countries. We shall continue our efforts in this regard, in particular together with Ukraine and the ICRC to prepare the ground for new humanitarian convoys.

Mr. Chairperson,

At the last meeting and today again, we have heard the latest tales about the alleged “Russian incursion” into Ukraine and the presence of regular Russian troops on its territory. We have not been shown any serious evidence. There has been no confirmation from the OSCE observers or from other reliable sources. No real evidence has emerged over the past week. I might add that a representative of the Department of State also spoke about this yesterday. The fabrication of new provocative and increasingly fanciful conjecture cannot be regarded as anything other than an attempt to justify the real change that has suddenly occurred in the military situation and the defeat in recent days of various Ukrainian military and volunteer formations.

Unfortunately, it has already become a hallmark of Kyiv to seek the guilty parties elsewhere. The Berkut fired on themselves on the Maidan, people set fire to themselves in Odessa, and then shot themselves, and militiamen allegedly shoot at refugee convoys, in other words they shoot at their own people. The guilty parties in the Boeing tragedy were determined even before any kind of investigation could begin. An impartial and transparent investigation was promised into all these and other outrageous events. We are awaiting the results.

Thank you for your attention.