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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1090th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

18 February 2016

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

Mr. Chairperson,

Seeing as this Permanent Council meeting is turning into a contest of who has done the best job of reading the reports by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), we are also going to have to remind you of some facts.

The monitors report growing tension in the security zone in south-eastern Ukraine and more frequent shelling of populated areas, causing suffering to civilians. On the evening of 11 February, the Petrovsky district of Donetsk came under fire. Several outbuildings were destroyed. On 13 February, Staromykhailivka and a militia-controlled suburb of Zaitseve came under heavy artillery fire from a “westerly direction” from an area where Ukrainian armed forces are stationed. Several buildings were destroyed and a 63-year-old man was injured. The next day, the shelling of Staromykhailivka resumed and another residential building was completely destroyed.

The SMM continues to document the disappearance of military equipment from depots belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces. Last week, the monitors were unable to account for 55 tanks, 7 mortars and 1 piece of artillery. Ukrainian weapons have again been recorded in the security zone.

Notwithstanding casualties among civilians due to landmines, the Ukrainian armed forces are not doing anything to eliminate this threat. Over the past week, the SMM monitors have again drawn attention to anti-tank mines which have been laid near the Ukrainian checkpoint in Marinka.

Instead of dealing with these issues in earnest, Ukraine is attempting to divert attention to other matters that have nothing to do with the threat posed to civilian lives. There is mounting hysteria again regarding the SMM’s border access and this in spite of the fact that the monitors go there on a regular basis. On 12 February, they visited the Chervonopartyzansk checkpoint in the Luhansk region and, on 14 February, the Marynivka

and Uspenka checkpoints, which are located on territory controlled by the armed formations of certain areas of the Donetsk region of Ukraine. The SMM has never seen anything unusual at the border.

I should like to propose, however, that we focus on analysing the situation from the perspective of resolving the Ukrainian crisis and removing the obstacles that stand in the way of this.

One of the key problems is that our colleagues are acting as if the Ukrainian Government is implementing the Package of Measures in good faith when, in actual fact, the opposite is happening.

The ceasefire regime, which came into effect on 1 September 2015, gave way to an escalation of artillery attacks soon after the local elections were held in Ukraine. Ukrainian security forces are now methodically shelling residential areas close to the line of contact, increasingly often using prohibited weapon types. Equipment missing from Ukrainian depots has, unfortunately, become a routine affair.

The visit by the SMM Principal Deputy Chief Monitor, Alexander Hug, to Zeitseve, which had been subjected to considerable shelling the day before, once again demonstrates that the monitors have a serious restraining effect. Their continued presence in the security zone is an important factor for stabilization and de-escalation.

The political aspects of the settlement are at an absolute deadlock. The amendments to the Constitution, which our colleagues refer to from time to time, have nothing to do with the Minsk agreements. The law on the special status of Donbas has been adopted, but its entry into force depends on conditions that are not provided for in the Package of Measures. The amnesty law has been drafted but has not been enacted yet. The exchange of prisoners and detained persons according to the principle of "all for all" has not happened.

In the humanitarian field, we are witnessing the continued blockade of Donbas. Crossing points, which are supposed to at least partially alleviate the situation of the local population, are few and far between. There is a trend towards closing the crossing points already in operation.

It should be remembered that before there can be any talk of returning control of the border to the Ukrainian authorities, all the political reforms stipulated in the Minsk agreements must be carried out.

With the assistance of the OSCE representative, efforts continue to be made within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group working group to reach an agreement on the modalities for local elections. The question is, however, whether the Verkhovna Rada will be able to endow these agreements with force of law if they are actually concluded. Judging by the balance of power in the Ukrainian parliament, there are major doubts on this front.

I should like to draw our colleagues' attention to the statement by Mr. Volodymyr Horbulin, adviser to the President of Ukraine and participant in the negotiations within the Trilateral Contact Group (in an interview in the Ukrainian weekly publication, Zerkalo Nedeli, No. 5). I quote: "The decisions taken to date as part of the Minsk process are, to a large extent, the result of the pressure of critical circumstances and external

factors, and therefore their binding force rests solely on Ukraine's goodwill". One further quotation: "The main and sole stratagem of the Ukrainian State is to buy time and build up its strength".

Incidentally, the Contact Group members from Ukraine have recently been showing an increased proclivity for public and very contradictory statements. The members are supposed to promote the Package of Measures supported by President Petro Poroshenko, not provide their own interpretations of these agreements (Roman Bezmerntnyi previously shared his view of the situation).

Unfortunately, Mr. Horbulin's words are being confirmed in practice – since signing the Package of Measures, the Ukrainian Government has effectively wasted the year building up its army's combat potential. Fresh forces in considerable numbers and equipped with new weapons have been brought to the line of contact. Foreign instructors and mercenaries have been recruited. The danger of returning to a scenario in which the crisis will be resolved by force has increased considerably. It seems as though foreign partners not only turn a blind eye to this, but sometimes even act as enablers in such dangerous gambits.

In a few days' time we shall mark the second anniversary of the so-called 21 February 2014 agreements, which paved the way for the peaceful evolution of reforms in Ukraine. That document was signed by representatives of a number of respected European countries. The fate of that document is well known – it was simply trampled underfoot. Radical forces turned the tables and seized power by force. Then, they unleashed a bloody civil war against those who disagreed with them. Nowadays, those who two years ago broke into government offices in Kyiv wielding Molotov cocktails are in fact holding the entire Minsk process hostage.

At our last meeting, the distinguished Permanent Representative of Ukraine promised to clarify the actual role of the Ukrainian radical forces, who he called true patriots. Indeed, it would be extremely useful to know the difference between so-called "patriots" and nationalist and extremist groups like Azov and Right Sector. How do the activities of such groups tally with the principle of the rule of law, which the Ukrainian representatives swear that they adhere to?

Armed clashes between radicals and regular Ukrainian troops have been recorded frequently. There have been numerous cases of murder, violence, looting, robbery and kidnapping, both near the line of contact and in other places in Donbas and the rest of Ukraine. So-called "activists" have played a key role in organizing the humanitarian and economic blockade of Donbas, which provides them with income from extorting money for goods and people crossing the line of contact.

It would also be interesting to learn from our colleagues – we address this question specifically to the representatives of the United States of America, Turkey and the European Union countries – what their law enforcement authorities would have to say about the blowing up of electricity pylons or the blocking of freight traffic.

I should like to draw the attention of our colleagues and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to the latest ban on Russian television channels in Ukraine, including Kukhnya-TV (a cooking channel), Moya Planeta, Nauka 2.0, Shanson-TV and Auto-Plus. Evidently, on this occasion, the authorities in Kyiv felt the need to protect their people from

the “illegal annexation” of Ukrainian borscht or the “aggression” of Russian pelmeni (dumplings).

Unfortunately, this is no laughing matter. After all, the Ukrainian representatives portray this media policy as being in line with OSCE standards. On the basis of such paranoid principles, Ukraine intends to arrange for Ukrainian media to broadcast in Donbas.

In conclusion, I stress once again that the Minsk Package of Measures is the basis for a peace process through direct dialogue among the parties to the Ukrainian conflict. It provides a framework for a sustainable settlement of the crisis and identifies principles for preserving the Donetsk and Luhansk regions as part of Ukraine with constitutional and legislative guarantees ensuring the rights of the people of Donbas. Attempts to discredit the Package of Measures and destroy or alter the negotiation format and monitoring mechanism will further de-stabilize the situation, which is not in the interests of the people of Ukraine or its neighbours.

Thank you for your attention.