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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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AT THE 1091st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 March 2016

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

Mr. Chairperson,

Today we have heard the latest propagandistic claims from the representatives of the United States of America, the European Union, Ukraine and Canada, which are repeated with enviable regularity at every Permanent Council meeting. However, this does not make them any closer to the truth. It is clear that the purpose here is something different, namely to justify the unwillingness of the authorities in Kyiv to implement the Minsk agreements and the inability of the Ukrainian leadership to solve the social and economic problems and develop national harmony and reconciliation. As long as exchanges of gunfire are heard in Donbas, they can continue distracting the country's population from the so-called achievements of the government of the "Maidan victors" and squeeze additional financing from Western creditors.

It is important at last to recognize that the only acceptable way of resolving the Ukrainian crisis is through the implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures and through direct dialogue among the parties within the Trilateral Contact Group and its subgroups. This process requires considerable support from the international community. We look forward to a productive meeting in the Normandy format, which is taking place today in Paris.

We consider the agreement reached yesterday in Minsk on putting an end to exercises in the security zone with live ammunition and involving weapons of all types and calibres to be a significant step towards strengthening security. It is vital to reduce the level of tension on the line of contact, restore the ceasefire, resume the withdrawal of heavy equipment and return to implementing the Package of Measures. We once again draw our colleagues' attention to the actions of nationalist battalions in the security zone. The continuing skirmishes between them and regular Ukrainian troops confirm the absence of proper control on the part of the Ukrainian Government.

We regard the attempts to place responsibility for the escalation of the situation entirely on Luhansk and Donetsk as unfounded, because it is Ukrainian formations that are now occupying “neutral ground” and filling the security zone with heavy equipment. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) has repeatedly reported that Ukrainian forces are amassing on the line of contact and that Ukrainian troops are being brought into Pavlopil, Pyshevyk and Zaitseve. On 26 February, the monitors confirmed that the Ukrainian armed forces had occupied part of Shyrokyne in violation of the agreement on the demilitarization of the village. It is the actions of the Ukrainian security forces, contrary to the logic of Minsk II, that are leading to the opposing forces’ dangerous proximity to one another.

Last week, the monitors were unable to account for 15 Grad and Uragan multiple-launch rocket systems, 50 pieces of artillery and 64 tanks at Ukrainian army depots. Moreover, 16 Grad multiple-launch rocket systems, 4 pieces of artillery and 2 tanks were discovered in the security zone. Skirmishes and exchanges of artillery fire have intensified. The village of Molodizhne (Luhansk region) was shelled on 27 February and Kominternove on 29 February. Some residential buildings were destroyed. The Mission has been reporting on the return of volunteer battalions to the line of contact. Right Sector has reappeared in Marinka.

We once again draw attention to the usefulness of equal and mirror monitoring on both sides of the line of contact with a special focus on the security zone. We note the work of the forward patrol bases – the increased presence of SMM monitors is an important restraining factor.

As for the complaints about ensuring the freedom of movement of SMM monitors, we suggest that they try carrying out regular visits to Ukrainian security force positions, particularly those of nationalist battalions, without notifying the Ukrainian command in advance. This will have an impact on the statistics.

Progress in the political talks is an important factor in strengthening the trust needed to de-escalate the situation. We call for intensified efforts in the working group on political issues to reach an agreement on a draft Ukrainian law on local elections. It is also necessary to resolve issues to ensure the security of voting in the same format. Agreement also needs to be reached on the implementation of point 5 of the Package of Measures on prohibiting the prosecution and punishment of persons in connection with the events that took place in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.

The parties must do more to ensure the release and exchange of hostages and illegally detained persons on the basis of the principle of “all for all”. We note the recent exchange of several representatives of the conflicting parties. Pragmatic and de-politicized direct dialogue among the parties and an honest approach in compiling lists of persons detained on both sides of the line of contact are called for in this context.

We are placing our hopes on the implementation of the demining agreement, particularly in terms of reducing the threat posed to the civilian population by landmines. The problem of unmarked and unfenced minefields is one of the most challenging issues. Massive queues form at the few Ukrainian crossing points that are open, and people attempting to find a way round them often end up in minefields. This has to stop. We look forward to improved co-operation within the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination.

That being said, the tightening of the blockade of Donbas confirms the policy of the authorities in Kyiv to increase tension. The Zaitseve and Maiorsk crossing points have been closed indefinitely, and the Olenivka checkpoint is threatened with closure. The only real explanation for this policy is the need to ensure additional income for army and nationalist battalion units, which are engaged in racketeering and extortion.

We call for an end to the policy of walls and fences and to the inhumane and unnatural blockade of Donbas, if the Ukrainian Government continues to regard certain areas of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions as its territory and their inhabitants as its citizens.

Mr. Chairperson,

The winter meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly demonstrated the wide-ranging views on the Ukrainian crisis. We are convinced that there are forces in Ukraine that are willing to work constructively to achieve peace and stability and to carry out the necessary reforms for the benefit of all segments of society and regions of the country.

However, the Ukrainian Government's policy is today still largely determined by right-wing radicals and nationalists. Those who seized power wielding Molotov cocktails in February 2014 began a punitive operation against the inhabitants of Donbas in April of the same year. The 10,000 dead and 20,000 injured (according to the United Nations) are on their conscience. Their actions have led to the mass flight of the population. More than 1 million citizens of Ukraine have fled to Russian territory and remained there. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, some 800,000 remain temporarily displaced.

Right-wing radical and nationalist forces are one of the main obstacles standing in the way of the peace process – they are the ones that continue to regard the subjugation of Donbas by force as the only way of resolving the crisis. Can those who for so many years have espoused the logic of violence and war switch to a peaceful settlement? For these forces, continuing conflict is vital for their survival and a source of enrichment.

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović, has called attention to the excesses of the nationalists of the Azov Civil Corps, who on 25 February 2016 blocked the exits to the Inter television station's headquarters. This is not an isolated incident – one need only recall the murder of the journalist Oles Buzina.

The nationalist influence on the policy of the official authorities in Kyiv is clearly visible from the example of freedom of the media in Ukraine. Many Russian journalists, media outlets, works of literature and films have been banned. Western documentaries on the events in Ukraine, including those by French and Italian filmmakers, have also been censored.

Distinguished colleagues,

Over the past two years, some participants in the events on the Maidan have openly admitted – and this has been shown on Ukrainian television – that for the “ideals of the revolution” they were shooting to kill and in fact killed police officers who were standing in the cordon. Those wishing to learn more about this can take a look at

www.birdinflight.com/ru/mir. There are also detailed studies by Western authors, including from Canada, for example Ivan Katchanovski from the University of Ottawa in his long article “The ‘Snipers’ Massacre’ on the Maidan in Ukraine”. The conclusion drawn is that the murders on the Maidan were organized and carried out by members of right-wing radical groups, including Right Sector and Svoboda, and were a key element of the violent overthrow of the authorities in Kyiv.

However, the main thing is not even the unofficial investigations but the absence of a proper investigation on the part of the authorities in Kyiv. Not only did they not detain the shooters immediately after the event, they did not even prevent the destruction of evidence. The International Advisory Panel of the Council of Europe deemed the work of the Ukrainian investigative authorities on this case unsatisfactory.

The investigation by the authorities in Kyiv into the burning of people at Trade Union House in Odessa on 2 May 2014 is also being sabotaged.

A great deal of information has been collected to date on these crimes and on the atrocities of nationalists in Donbas – murder, violence, robbery and looting.

The Ukrainian authorities have full justification to bring the radicals to justice, including those who to this day enjoy parliamentary immunity. However, even those in custody are quickly released following pressure from the radicals. That’s the kind of rule of law we have here.

Neutralizing the radical groups and movements is an extremely important, although not the only, prerequisite for giving the necessary impetus to the Minsk Process. Pandering to radicals will lead to further destabilization of the situation, which is not in the interests of the people of Ukraine or its neighbours.

Thank you for your attention.