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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1121st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 December 2016

**In response to the statements by
the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine,
Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, and the Special Representative of the
OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact
Group, Ambassador Martin Sajdik**

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank Ambassadors Ertuğrul Apakan and Martin Sajdik for their detailed reports. We express our sincere support for your work aimed at facilitating a swift and peaceful settlement of the Ukrainian conflict. It is hard work given that not only is the implementation of the Minsk agreements on the ground stalled, but there is also no visible progress even in the negotiation process in Minsk and within the Normandy format.

The Minsk agreements remain the only framework for a settlement. The work of the Trilateral Contact Group needs to be intensified if the agreements are to be implemented because this format is the key platform at which the parties to the conflict are represented and where there is direct dialogue between the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk. The Ukrainian Government is unwilling to negotiate in good faith and refuses even to set out its position regarding key questions on paper. At every meeting the discussion has to start again from scratch. The result is that negotiations on all the key issues are either making no headway or are progressing on the basis of “one step forward, two steps back”. We trust that Ambassador Sajdik will manage to establish some consistency in this format’s work and adopt clear rules of procedure. The working group on economic issues, for example, is still blocked because of the Ukrainian Government’s destructive position. This is preventing the parties from drawing up agreements on vital issues such as the water supply in Luhansk. The Ukrainian Government is deliberately turning the situation into a crisis, although everything could have been resolved back in early autumn. Our ministers in Minsk have confirmed the importance of a swift settlement of this issue. We hope that the working group on economic issues will resume its work without delay.

The key goal of the Minsk agreements is a comprehensive political settlement, which includes a number of elements. Specifically, these are refraining from prosecuting persons

who were involved in the events in eastern Ukraine on either side of the line of contact, adopting a permanent law on the special status of Donbas and its enactment together with the holding of local elections, and confirming this status in the Ukrainian Constitution. We see no progress in this area. The Ukrainian Government is using as a pretext the continuing military tension in the conflict zone, which it is provoking itself.

The population is in urgent need of an improvement in the humanitarian and economic situation. People are suffering as a result of restrictions on the freedom of movement of people and goods, and on the payment of pensions and social security benefits. We welcome the efforts of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC), the co-ordinators of the relevant working groups and the parties themselves to facilitate local ceasefires so as to permit repair and restoration work, including the wooden bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska. Of course, it would be better if the Ukrainian Government were to repair the road bridge that was blown up by the Ukrainian armed forces.

Both sides need to agree on the modalities for the release of detained persons, first and foremost juveniles, women, the elderly and the sick.

We greatly appreciate the work of the SMM. We note that the quality of its work is gradually improving in terms of its objectivity and geographical and thematic coverage. It needs to continue to move in this direction. It is important to document objectively and fully the consequences of the shelling of towns, villages and infrastructure. We are looking forward to a consolidated thematic report on all recorded cases of such shelling since the very beginning of the conflict – since the shelling of Sloviansk, Semenivka, Donetsk and Luhansk in the spring and summer of 2014. It would be useful if the report were backed up with photographs. We have taken note of the new method for analysing places damaged by shelling and the abandonment of an analysis based on shell craters. Effectively, the absurdity of the claims that the militia were shelling their own towns has finally become clear to everyone. The Ukrainian Government was not very enthusiastic about the investigation proposed by Donetsk's representatives into the shelling of Makiivka on 27 October. The Ukrainian Government is also shifting responsibility for violations of the ceasefire regime in connection with the disengagement of forces and hardware in Stanytsia Luhanska. The most recently agreed starting date for this, 26 November, has been missed. On 27 November, the SMM camera recorded a shot fired within the disengagement area from north-west to south-east. In spite of this, it is essential keep on moving and to agree on new disengagement areas.

The most acute problem today is the continuing shelling of settlements along the line of contact. Last week alone, two civilians were injured in the Petrovsky district of Donetsk and Yasynuvata as a result of shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces. Styla, Sakhanka, Bezimenne, Zhovte and Sokilnyky were hit by artillery, and there was damage to houses and infrastructure. The SMM should concentrate its patrols in the security zone, including in the disengagement areas. We are witnessing an alarming and systematic massing of Ukrainian armed forces in the security zone. The agreements on the withdrawal of artillery, mortars and tanks are not being implemented. Equipment going missing from Ukrainian armed forces' storage facilities has become a regular occurrence. The refusal to allow SMM monitors access to storage facilities near the line of contact is particularly worrying.

The attempts to discredit the monitors and the SMM in general are a cause for serious concern. On 27 November, a sport utility vehicle with fake OSCE and SMM markings driven by Ukrainian soldiers was seen not far from the line of contact in Halytsynivka. Such actions undermine confidence in our Organization.

We note the SMM's development of contacts with the local authorities, which contributes to the effectiveness of the Mission's work including its freedom of movement. The situation is clearly improving in the territory controlled by the militia – we can see this from the trends in the statistics provided by the SMM.

Mines and unexploded ordnance pose a risk to the safety of the inhabitants of Donbas. The SMM regularly reports unmarked minefields. On 22 November, the monitors reported a tripwire mine near a Ukrainian armed forces' checkpoint on the Popasna–Katerynivka road. On 26 November, an elderly man stepped on a booby trap on the outskirts of Marinka, which is controlled by the security forces. Demining efforts need to continue in accordance with the existing agreements.

Distinguished colleagues,

Ukraine is experiencing a period of political, social and economic turbulence. The SMM should pay greater attention to this, reflect it in its daily reports and not hush up the facts. Manifestations of nationalism and extremism, harassment for political reasons, the degradation of freedom of speech, the persecution of journalists and the threat to the security of citizens far away from the conflict zone – all of these questions also directly influence the prospects of resolving the crisis.

We should not, for example, ignore the statements by the Ukrainian Minister of Culture, Yevhen Nyshchuk, about the “genetic inferiority” of a significant proportion of the country's population. These are not slips of the tongue but irresponsible utterances by a political scientist. These are the words of a representative of the ruling regime. The former Prime Minister, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who has currently disappeared not only from the political horizons, but, as it would seem, also from Ukraine once called the inhabitants of Donbas “subhumans”. In April 2014, the Permanent Representative of the United States of America called the representatives of Donetsk who had protested against the coup in Kyiv “knuckleheads”. After this, you do not need to tell us that the problem of Ukrainian nationalism is being exaggerated. It exists and it is very serious because it is being encouraged at the level of State policy. The SMM is quite capable of covering this problem, which is directly connected with violations of OSCE principles and commitments and is one of the main causes of the current Ukrainian crisis.

Once again, we thank Ambassadors Apakan and Sajdik and through them all the SMM monitors and the co-ordinators of the working groups in Minsk for their efforts and wish them every success.

Thank you for your attention.