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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1320th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 June 2021

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

Mr. Chairperson,

Tension is growing again in Donbas. Reports of an attack by a sabotage and reconnaissance group of the Ukrainian armed forces on a militia observation post near the settlement of Holubivske (in certain areas of the Luhansk region) on 11 June are a source of great concern. According to the Luhansk authorities, five people were killed. None of the dead were professional soldiers: prior to the start of the Ukrainian Government's military operation in Donbas, these residents of the region were civilians going about their peaceful occupations, but they were subsequently forced to take up arms to protect their families. As a result of the attack on 11 June, four children have been left fatherless.

The attack occurred despite the ceasefire-strengthening measures nominally in force since 22 July 2020, which provide for a ban on firing and on the conduct of offensive, reconnaissance and sabotage operations. The same measures provide for a mechanism for monitoring and responding to ceasefire violations, namely a co-ordination mechanism "through the facilitation of the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination in its current setting". The Ukrainian military is stubbornly avoiding bringing the mechanism into full-scale operation, which is jeopardizing the ceasefire in general.

The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde, was in Ukraine for the second time this year on 14 and 15 June. She visited Kyiv and also Donbas and Pryazovia, where she met with members of the Ukrainian military and Ukrainian officials. We regret that once again she did not find an opportunity to visit areas of Donbas on the other side of the line of contact and to see with her own eyes the humanitarian consequences of the Ukrainian Government's socio-economic blockade and punitive operation against the region's population. We emphasize that taking a one-sided view of the situation on the ground and ignoring the other parties to the conflict who are signatories to the Minsk agreements, namely the representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, does not help in achieving a settlement.

We urge the OSCE Chairmanship to use the opportunities available to it to facilitate direct dialogue among all the parties to the internal Ukrainian conflict – the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk – in the interests of a lasting and viable settlement.

In the meantime, there is a growing pile of unconstructive legislative initiatives by Ukraine that run counter to its Constitution, national legislation and international commitments, including United Nations Security Council resolution 2202 whereby the Package of Measures of 12 February 2015 was endorsed.

On 2 June, President Zelenskyy issued a decree giving effect to the latest decision on Donbas by the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine. It refers to the application of the “concept of a transitional period” in Donbas, which provides for some kind of special legal regime that has nothing to do with the provisions of the Minsk agreements. As the Co-ordinator of the Political Working Group of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), Pierre Morel, reported during an informal briefing at the OSCE on 16 June, this draft law has not been submitted by Ukraine for consideration in the Working Group and has not been discussed with the representatives of Donbas. We are thus faced with yet another attempt by the Ukrainian Government to exclude Donetsk and Luhansk from the discussions to determine the political contours of the region’s future. What is more, the Ukrainian Government continues to ignore the proposals submitted by the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk for giving substance to the road map aimed at reaching agreement on all the legal aspects of a special status for Donbas. I recall that in accordance with the instructions of the “Normandy format” summit in Paris on 9 December 2019, they should be agreed on “as outlined in the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements from 2015” – that is, in consultation and in agreement with the representatives of certain areas of Donbas. It is not surprising that under these circumstances the Working Group’s work is deadlocked, while in all the six years that the Group has existed the Ukrainian Government has not implemented a single one of the decisions agreed on with the representatives of Donbas with regard to a political settlement.

In addition, on 18 May President Zelenskyy submitted a draft law on the indigenous peoples of Ukraine to the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament). This is effectively a policy of ethnic segregation, which has brought States to the brink of national catastrophe and war many times in history. The draft law provides for special political and sociocultural rights for inhabitants of Ukraine classed as such “indigenous peoples”. At the same time, for years the Ukrainian Government has been avoiding granting to certain areas of Donbas permanent special status that provides for the right to linguistic self-determination in accordance with paragraph 11 of the Package of Measures. Obviously, such approaches by the Ukrainian authorities merely complicate further the already deadlocked settlement process.

We draw attention to the resolution of the Federation Council of 2 June 2021 adopted in this connection by the Russian parliamentarians containing an appeal to the international community, and also to the statement by the State Duma of 8 June 2021 expressing concern about the discriminatory nature of the legislative initiatives of the current Ukrainian authorities aimed at exacerbating tensions and conflicts both within Ukraine and beyond its borders. We emphasize that the lack of a coherent response on the part of the OSCE to the manifestations of discrimination in Ukraine sends the wrong signal to the Ukrainian Government that it is permissible to continue a destructive policy that undermines not only the foundations of its own Constitution but also the country’s commitments under international law.

Mr. Chairperson,

We have repeatedly heard assurances in this room from the representative of Ukraine about the zero tolerance of that country’s authorities when it comes to manifestations of the glorification of Nazism. Reality is showing us otherwise. On 13 June, the Presidential Regiment was represented at a solemn memorial service in Kyiv for a deceased former member of the SS Division Galicia, Orest Vaskul.

This is in stark contrast to the Ukrainian law enforcement agencies’ harassment of activist Maurice Ibrahim for his participation in the Second World War Victory Day celebrations in Odessa on

9 May this year. He is accused, among other things, of organizing the Immortal Regiment commemorative event, in which participants marched through the streets of the city holding portraits of their relatives and loved ones. The court hearing is scheduled for the symbolic date of 22 June.

One further point. We should like to draw attention to a prayer vigil involving several thousands of the faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) held in Kyiv on 15 June. Its participants came from all over the country to raise with the authorities the issue of stopping the intimidation of the UOC and the need for their rights to be protected. In an address to the gathering, Archbishop Nikolay of Vasylkiv said that since the Ukrainian authorities began interfering in church affairs in 2018, UOC believers have lost access to over 500 UOC places of worship, many of which have been forcibly taken over.

It is noteworthy that the personal details of one of the organizers of this peaceful action, Vasyl Makarovsky, were posted the same day on the notorious Myrotvorets website, which makes no secret of its co-operation with the Ukrainian intelligence services. It is also stated there that he is suspected of “anti-Ukrainian activities” of some sort. As the situation in recent years has shown, for some radicals, seeing the details of public figures and journalists posted on this website is a *de facto* call to commit illegal, violent acts against them. Need I remind you that a number of prominent figures in Ukrainian public life listed on that website have already been murdered (I might add that there has been no progress in the investigation of many high-profile murders).

We call on Ukraine’s external “minders” to bring maximum influence to bear on the country’s leadership so as to induce it to fulfil its existing commitments and act in the interests of peace and civil accord. The Ukrainian Government should demonstrate its commitment to the OSCE principles not only in words but also in practice. This is important for the swift achievement of peace in eastern Ukraine.

Thank you for your attention.