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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE  
1324th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 July 2021

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

Madam Chairperson,

First of all, I should like to draw attention to the article by Russian President Vladimir Putin entitled “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians”, which was published on 12 July. Incidentally, the original article is also available in Ukrainian. It assesses, among other things, the background, determining factors and current state of affairs in the settlement of the crisis in Ukraine. We recommend that you read it carefully.<sup>1</sup>

The lack of progress in the settlement of the internal Ukrainian crisis is for the most part due to the unwillingness of the country’s current authorities to engage in genuine dialogue with the plenipotentiary representatives of certain areas of Donbas. The Ukrainian Government continues to talk to the region’s residents exclusively from a position of military force. This is done under the control and with the *de facto* endorsement of Ukraine’s foreign “minders”, who are essentially engaging in direct external steering of the country, including oversight of the Ukrainian government bodies, intelligence services and armed forces.

Recent examples of their influence over the exercise of that State’s sovereign rights include the so-called judicial reform, amendments to the Law of Ukraine on the Judiciary and the Status of Judges, and some legislative acts on the re-establishment of the High Qualification Commission of Judges. These new measures are intended to determine the composition of the country’s judiciary by means of a selection commission in which certain “international experts” with the right to a deciding vote participate. What is more, their activities will be financed from foreign sources. It also comes as no surprise that the United States of America and the European Union have already put forward proposals regarding candidates to occupy the positions of so-called “independent” experts on this commission.

The political sponsors and “minders” of the current Ukrainian authorities have not simply assumed *de facto* responsibility for what is happening in Ukraine today. They are actively involved in promoting Russophobia and anti-Russian sentiment in that country and implementing the “vision” of Ukraine as some kind of “anti-Russia”. They seem to believe that it is easier to do so in the context of an ongoing conflict in

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1 <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>

the east of the country. There is therefore clearly an interest in maintaining military tension near Russia's borders. How else can one explain the lack of any criticism on the part of the current patrons of the Ukrainian Government against the representatives of the Ukrainian authorities, who regularly question the necessity of strict implementation of the Package of Measures of 12 February 2015 (endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202)? The regular calls by representatives of Ukraine to "modernize" and rewrite the Minsk agreements, change the existing negotiation formats and rule out the participation of representatives of certain areas of Donbas in these do not elicit any comments either.

In 2020–2021, the Ukrainian leadership and its official representatives have continued to downplay the importance of the Minsk agreements, thereby undermining the settlement process. Here are a couple of recent examples. On 6 July, the information policy adviser to Ukraine's delegation to the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), Oleksiy Arestovych, stated on a Ukrainian television channel that the Minsk agreements "express the sides' goodwill" and "are not binding". He went as far as to argue that the Ukrainian Government has the right not to implement them at all. In an interview on 9 July, the first deputy head of Ukraine's TCG delegation, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Reintegration, Oleksiy Reznikov, proclaimed that even in spite of their endorsement by the United Nations Security Council it is "erroneous" to consider the Minsk agreements binding.

President Zelenskyy has repeatedly reiterated that he sees the Minsk agreements as necessary primarily to achieve foreign policy goals, namely to maintain the pressure of sanctions on Russia. However, with regard to the settlement of the internal conflict in eastern Ukraine, he said that, "personally", he "would withdraw" from the Minsk agreements because he was dissatisfied with the content of the Package of Measures and the sequence of the steps stipulated therein.

It is not surprising that, more than two years into his Presidency, Volodymyr Zelenskyy has not introduced a single draft law aimed at the practical implementation of the Package of Measures. The law on a special status for Donbas, technically extended for the current year, has not been in force for a single day and is not permanent. The Ukrainian authorities refuse to codify into legislation the procedure for its entry into force under the "Steinmeier formula". There has been no progress on constitutional reform or on reflecting the specificities of self-government for Donbas in the country's Constitution, nor on an amnesty, local elections and so on.

Quite the opposite, the Ukrainian leadership continues to make proposals that are at odds with the provisions of the Minsk agreements. I am referring in particular to the draft law on the fundamentals of national resistance and the preparation of draft laws on the transitional period, collaborators and other issues. The law on reintegration, which came into force on 24 February 2018, also continues to apply, undermining the implementation of the Package of Measures.

Radical nationalism is being encouraged by the authorities, which merely serves to deepen the social divide. Nazi accomplices are being put on pedestals. The masterminds behind and participants in monstrous, shockingly brutal killings of civilians, including children, women and the elderly – such as the Volhynia (Wołyń) massacre – are being glorified. In July 1943, Ukrainian nationalists, acting in the name of Ukrainian national exclusivity, brutally killed thousands of Poles, Jews and members of other nationalities. Commemorative events to mark the anniversary of this tragedy were held in Poland a few days ago. Meanwhile, in a number of Ukrainian cities, streets and even a stadium have been named after one of the participants in these events: Roman Shukhevych, who served in armed units affiliated with the Third Reich.

There is an all-out assault on the Russian language and on the rights of Russian-speaking inhabitants and national minorities in Ukraine. Examples include the laws on the State language, new provisions of which will enter into force on 16 July, and also on education. A law on indigenous peoples, which aspires to

extraterritorial validity and implies an unequal political and legal status for different ethnic groups, has been adopted, diverting attention from the pressing problems of the Ukrainian people. Against this backdrop, the Ukrainian Government is demonstratively “forgetting” about the right to linguistic self-determination for the residents of Donbas provided for in paragraph 11 of the Package of Measures.

The 2019 recommendation by the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission to adopt a law on national minorities has not been implemented. This subject was mentioned in the report of the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), Yaşar Halit Çevik, to the Permanent Council on 8 July. We urge the Mission to continue to monitor all aspects connected with the protection of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms and to support these in accordance with its current mandate.

The inhumane economic and transport blockade of Donbas continues. The Ukrainian Government is not just pushing this region out of the general Ukrainian legal and economic space, but is effectively pursuing a policy of strangling it. All of this, coupled with the regular shelling of towns in Donbas, is inflicting massive suffering on the civilian population. The obligations regarding the resumption of socio-economic ties (paragraph 8 of the Package of Measures) are not being fulfilled, including the obligation to pay pensions and welfare benefits, with no strings attached, to people living on the other side of the line of contact.

Comparing Donbas to a “cancerous tumour” and calling certain areas of the region “mentally sick territories”, representatives of the Ukrainian authorities continue to deny residents on both sides of the line of contact the opportunity to exercise their legitimate political rights. The issue of organizing local elections in line with the Package of Measures is getting nowhere. It is stipulated there that all the modalities for holding these elections should be determined in consultation and agreement with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk. The Ukrainian Government continues to block such dialogue in the TCG. In addition, it is unclear what will happen with the local elections in 18 areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions controlled by the Ukrainian military that were cancelled by a resolution of the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) of 15 July 2020.

In fact, the Ukrainian Government aims to exercise control over all the territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions exclusively through military and civil administrations, something that is in no way provided for by the Minsk agreements. This option was set out in the draft law on the transitional period. If this plan, which entails political and legal discrimination against the local population, does not work, there is also a military scenario as described last week by the aforementioned Mr. Arestovych. If the scenario involving the use of force fails, an alternative in the form of a complete break with Donbas is envisaged. Recently, President Zelenskyy even publicly speculated about the possibility of holding a referendum of sorts in the country with the aim of completely fencing off certain areas of Donbas. Significantly, the path of strict implementation of the Minsk agreements is not even being considered over in Kyiv.

We categorically call for a return to the logic of a peaceful, political and diplomatic settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine on the basis of the Minsk agreements, to which there is no alternative. The key to achieving peace is political will on the part of the Ukrainian Government to engage in dialogue within the TCG, fulfil its existing obligations under the Minsk agreements, and reach sustainable agreements with the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk.

Thank you for your attention.