



**Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine
at the 784-th FSC Plenary Meeting**
(25 March 2015 at 10.00, Hofburg)

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to start by expressing our appreciation to the outgoing FSC Chairmanship of Mongolia for the work done in the first trimester as well as for its professionalism and dedication shown in adverse circumstances dominated by the crisis in and around Ukraine. Ukraine warmly welcomes the next FSC Chairmanship of Montenegro and wishes it every success in guiding our work in the second trimester of 2015.

Distinguished colleagues,

Ukraine consistently implements the algorithm of the Minsk agreements, from de-escalation to political settlement, and continues to see a political solution as the only way out of this conflict. The Ukrainian armed forces ceased fire at agreed date and time, have strictly abided by the cease-fire since then and have not used arms except for cases of self-defense. The Ukrainian side commenced withdrawal of heavy weapons on February 26 and on 20 March 2015 completed it to new positions which had been earlier prepared. Numerous convoys of the Ukrainian military hardware, observed by the OSCE monitors over these days when moving away from the line of contact, served as a solid proof of Ukraine's commitment to de-escalation and implementation of reached agreements. Most notably, the SMM reported that it had access to government heavy weapons storage sites and that those sites contained all of the weapons expected to be there. While there were some restrictions, these isolated incidents appeared to be the exception to the rule and decreased in number and significance over time. These individual incidents were mostly caused by the security situation on the ground, undermined by continuing provocations of the illegal armed groups.

Being consistent in the commitment to seek full implementation of the Minsk agreements, the Ukrainian side last week made important decisions relating to the political process in our country. On 17 March 2015 the Parliament of Ukraine adopted a few legislative acts that are consistent with the letter and spirit of the Minsk agreements, Ukrainian legislation and our OSCE commitments. The documents open the way for holding early local elections in Donbas, which are a key element of the broader political process. These decisions of the Ukrainian Parliament demonstrate our country's commitment to full implementation of the Minsk agreements of September 2014 and February 2015.

In striking contrast to the continued, concrete steps taken by the Government of Ukraine, the Russian Federation until now disregards its obligations under the Minsk agreements aimed at placing de-escalation and peaceful political resolution on a solid and sustainable basis and continues to impede the peace process, thus further eroding the credibility of its statements and declarations. Throughout the first stage of the FSC annual session of 2015, despite consistent calls from Ukraine and its international partners, the Russian Federation has failed to meet its commitments pursuant to number of OSCE instruments in politico-military dimension; no substantial step was made by the Russian side to solve the conflict in Donbas peacefully.

Contrary to the Minsk agreements, Russian military personnel and hardware remain on the territory of Ukraine and are not being withdrawn to Russia. While the level of hostilities appears to have reduced, the attacks and armed provocations by the militants,

largely near the settlement of Shyrokyne in the vicinity of Mariupol and the Donetsk airport, continue. Over 87 cases of violation of ceasefire by the illegal armed groups were registered over the period of 19-24 March. Despite the declared ceasefire, which should have lasted for over a month now, the toll of casualties grows on a nearly daily basis. 3 Ukrainian soldiers lost their lives and 14 were wounded in this period.

While Russia-backed militants publicly claimed to have completed the withdrawal of their heavy weapons from the contact line, SMM reports have repeatedly documented that they continue to deploy and use heavy weapons. The militants have not provided the SMM with full information about their heavy weapons withdrawal plans.

Russia and the militants it backs have not yet provided security guarantees to SMM monitors, deny to the Mission the freedom of movement which impedes performance of verification tasks assigned to the SMM. We reiterate that for the SMM to verify a withdrawal in line with the Minsk package, the SMM must have full access and monitor the movements and the storage of heavy weapons. We urge the Russian Federation to exert its influence on the illegal armed groups it supports to provide for the safe and unimpeded performance by the SMM of its verification functions.

**Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished colleagues,**

The delegation of Ukraine would like to draw attention of the Forum to the unfolded Russian propaganda campaign on Ukraine's non-compliance with the Minsk agreements. On 21 March 2015 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in its statement accused Ukraine of alleged violations of the Minsk agreements. The Russian side referred to a video of the Reuters news agency, arguing that the volunteer battalion "Azov" used the howitzer D-30 near the settlement of Shyrokyne located directly on the contact line.

The MFA of Ukraine immediately responded to these unfounded accusations stressing that the video shot was made during a military exercise in the settlement of Urzuf, which is located 45 kilometers west of Mariupol. Furthermore, it was stressed that the very fact of inviting foreign journalists to monitor the removal of heavy artillery confirmed the unprecedented openness of the Ukrainian side.

In its haste to utilize unverified information the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation has once again misled the international community, diverting its attention from the real violations of the Minsk agreements by the Russia-backed militants.

Ukraine has consistently implemented the Minsk agreements. In accordance with paragraph 2 of the Package of Measures on Implementation of the Minsk Agreements the Armed Forces of Ukraine have completed the withdrawal of heavy weapons, including artillery systems of 100 mm caliber and above. The withdrawal of the D-30 howitzers from the area near Shyrokyne was completed under the control of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM). After the completion of the withdrawal of heavy weapons, not a single instance was recorded where artillery, including the D-30 howitzers, had been used by the Ukrainian side. It is significant to note that the OSCE SMM has not expressed any concern about any non-fulfillment by the Ukrainian side of agreements regarding the withdrawal of heavy weapons.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine has also pointed out that repeated ceasefire violations are being observed on the part of the Russia-backed illegal armed groups that are operating in some parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Statements by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the supposed complete withdrawal of heavy weapons by the militants have not been confirmed by the OSCE SMM. In this regard, the MFA of Ukraine requested the Russian MFA to explain the shelling of

Shyrokyne and Krymske over the last 24 hours by, respectively, 120 mm mortars and BM-21 Grad multiple launch rocket systems -weapons, which, according to the Russian side, supposedly have long since been withdrawn.

The MFA of Ukraine expects that in the future the Russian Foreign Ministry will review information more carefully and will base its statements not on the interpretation of facts but on the official findings of the OSCE monitors.

Distinguished colleagues,

The Delegation of Ukraine already referred to the ongoing violations of the ceasefire by the pro-Russian militants. Let me bring to your attention some facts of continuous violations by the pro-Russian militants, which were registered last week:

-on 19 March pro-Russian militants continued to violate the Minsk agreements, carrying out fire attacks from artillery and mortars at the Ukrainian military positions. They opened a fire twice on the ATO positions near the village of Shyrokyne from the 82mm mortars and small arms;

-on 20 March the situation in the ATO zone tended to escalate. In particular, some positions of the Ukrainian forces were shelled from tanks 4 times near the settlement of Sokolniki. The Ukrainian military came under the "Grad" shelling for the first time during the last month. The Ukrainian positions were also shelled by militants from mortars near the village of Stanytsya Luhanska;

-on 21 March pro-Russian militants continued to violate the ceasefire regime and increased their fierce attacks with the 120mm mortars on the settlement of Pisky;

-on 22 March the Ukrainian military positions in Donbas were shelled from heavy weapons, which under the Minsk agreements had to be withdrawn from the contact line in early March. Pro-Russian militants attacked 4 times the Ukrainian positions with 122mm artillery and 120mm howitzers in the area of Avdiivka. The separatists shelled twice the city by tanks. As the result of these shellings one Ukrainian soldier was wounded;

-on 23 March the militants continued to concentrate its forces near the contact line in the occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The artillery systems, new air defense systems, MLRS "Grad", "Smerch", and "Urahan", self-propelled artillery equipment, as well as significant reinforcement of manpower were registered on that day. At night, a column of 12 tanks arrived in the town of Horlivka;

-on 24 March militants opened the fire 6 times from mortars 120mm and 82mm in the area of the settlement of Shyrokyne. In addition, the militants group using intense small arms fire tried to force the Ukrainian units to leave their positions in the western part of the settlement.

We note with concern that the militants continue to concentrate manpower and hardware in the vicinity of Mariupol, Artemivsk and Luhansk. Over the recent week their leaders have again resorted to aggressive rhetoric, threatening to resume fullfledged military actions. Such provocative statements, which led to serious violations of the Minsk agreements in the past, are again left without any reaction from the Russian Federation.

Mr. Chairman,

Numerous attempts since March 2014 to use the FSC mandate and the existing politico-military toolbox to the full extent were undercut as the situation on the ground has been further escalating, threatening not only Ukraine and its people but also the whole

European security architecture. At this final FSC meeting in the first trimester of 2015 we once again urge the Russian Federation to return to the tenets of the fundamental OSCE principles, to respect sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, to reverse annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

We repeat our call for the full implementation of all aspects of the Minsk Agreements by all signatories as the only way forward towards a sustainable political solution. Full respect for the ceasefire regime and a verified withdrawal of heavy weapons are essential steps in the implementation of the Minsk Agreements. We once again call for the immediate withdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment, as well as mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine under OSCE monitoring as well as disarmament of all illegal armed groups. Russia must immediately halt exporting terrorism to Ukraine and stop interference into internal affairs of my country.

I would like to conclude by reiterating our call on the Russian Federation to immediately take all necessary practical steps towards de-escalation in Donbas, stipulated by the Minsk agreements, and exert its influence on the militants it supports to do likewise.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.