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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1031st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

18 December 2014

**On the situation in Ukraine and violations of the
Minsk agreements by the central authorities**

Mr. Chairperson,

We note that the intensity of the shelling in eastern Ukraine has decreased dramatically. Heavy weapons are no longer being used. There is a real chance of moving things in a peaceful direction, provided, of course, there is a sustainable ceasefire by all parties.

In order to consolidate the positive developments, the Minsk agreements need to be implemented consistently, and the convening of a Contact Group meeting at the earliest opportunity should assist in this. We trust that such a meeting can be held in the near future and that it will adopt important decisions on implementing the agreements reached earlier.

The priorities include the withdrawal of heavy weapons and equipment from the line of contact and the release of forcibly detained persons. It is important to begin dealing more quickly with the problems of economic co-operation between the central authorities and Donbas, reconstructing the regions affected and providing humanitarian aid and social support to the population.

According to our sources, the withdrawal of heavy weapons by the insurgents is in full swing, as confirmed in the reports of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM). We are also receiving encouraging signals with regard to the exchange of detainees.

However, there are also reasons for serious concern connected with the violation and non-implementation of the Minsk agreements by Kyiv. If the current period of de-escalation proves to be merely a tactical pause by the Ukrainian authorities to build up their offensive potential to be used in a subsequent attack on eastern Ukraine, as was the case in July, this is a recipe for disaster.

A number of facts provide cause for concern. There has been no withdrawal of heavy weapons by the Ukrainian security forces from the demarcation line. Mines and explosive

obstacles within the security zone have not been removed. On the contrary, new ones are being laid. Troops continue to be concentrated along the demarcation line. New units and heavy weapons, including artillery and multiple-launch rocket systems, are being sent to Debaltseve and other key points in the conflict zone. The “silence regime” has been violated by the Ukrainian military. However, both parties to the conflict are guilty of doing this.

Amid statements regarding the provision of foreign military aid to Ukraine, there have been reports of the arrival of military goods, as well as foreign military experts and mercenaries.

We should like to warn our colleagues against becoming involved in a resumption of the punitive operation against the people of Donbas. The cost, which the United States of America is so fond of talking about, in this case will in fact increase primarily for the civilian population, which bears the brunt of all the suffering and horrors of civil war.

According to the most conservative estimates, 4,707 people have been killed, over 10,000 injured, and around a million have left their homes because instead of peaceful dialogue the Ukrainian authorities have resorted to force to suppress those who disagree with the policies pursued by the “Maidan government”. In this connection, we are again seeing attempts to shift all the blame for the destruction of towns and infrastructure in Donbas on to the insurgents and Russia.

However, it is not them but the Ukrainian security forces who adopted the tactics of shelling and the indiscriminate use of heavy weapons, cluster munitions and air power against towns and villages. In more than 300 cases of such shelling, no progress has been observed in the investigation announced by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Office of the Prosecutor General and the Security Service of Ukraine, which, we might add, is not surprising.

Until recently, the crimes committed by members of the various volunteer battalions, which are establishing their own rules in the areas under their control, have been denied or covered up. These crimes include murder, kidnapping, torture and other forms of violence, and looting. Arbitrary detention, kidnapping and torture of persons suspected of “supporting the separatists” continue. “Suspicious persons” are being apprehended across the country and lists of unreliable citizens compiled.

Meanwhile, the Prosecutor General of Ukraine is talking about 3,000 criminal cases against members of the Ukrainian security forces suspected of murder, robbery and theft. There are reports of atrocities in Mariupol – looting, people disappearing and rape. Since SMM monitors are temporarily stationed in this city, they could pay particular attention to the verification of these reports, as directly provided for in their mandate.

The humanitarian situation in the conflict zone remains serious owing to the destruction of infrastructure and the economic and financial blockade of the region. It appears that the Ukrainian Government has no intention of implementing point 8 of the Minsk Protocol on the adoption of measures to improve the humanitarian situation in Donbas. Not only has it deprived the inhabitants of the region of their social benefits, but recently security forces have been blocking the delivery of food and humanitarian cargo from the central authorities. For several days now a volunteer battalion has been preventing a humanitarian convoy organized by Rinat Akhmetov from entering Donetsk. Such actions are exacerbating the situation of the most vulnerable segments of the population, not to mention the fact that

they are further undermining public confidence in the central authorities, which is essential for the restoration of a common space in Ukraine.

The economic strangulation of the region and the plans to starve the population will be no less destructive for the unity of the country than a military operation. Under these circumstances, humanitarian deliveries from Russia remain practically the only way of helping the population to survive. Once again, I draw the attention of the European Union representative to the fact that the last two humanitarian convoys were inspected by Ukrainian representatives. The SMM monitors also had an opportunity to see for themselves that this was humanitarian cargo.

We have heard about President Poroshenko's plans to resume the supply of electricity and heat to Donbas. If this is true, we trust that it will be followed by other steps aimed at improving the lives of Ukrainian citizens in the east.

We expect that Kyiv's policy of rejecting Donbas will change and that dialogue, including within the framework of the Contact Group, will allow the parties to reach agreements that will strengthen the peaceful path to a resolution of the situation.

We might recall that resolution of the crisis in Ukraine is possible only through inclusive national dialogue, and comprehensive and transparent constitutional reform with the involvement of all regions and political forces in Ukraine.

As for violations of the Helsinki principles, we are prepared to thoroughly look into this issue at forthcoming meetings since we believe that everything that has happened in Ukraine is the result of interference in its internal affairs, which led to the *coup d'état* in Kyiv.

Thank you for your attention.