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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1329th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

12 August 2021

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

Madam Chairperson,

The past week has not seen any headway in the settlement of the crisis in Ukraine. Quite the opposite in fact. The Ukrainian Government continues to be a source of unpleasant surprises. A few days ago, we witnessed public statements by the country's leadership that reinforce our doubts as to its ability to abandon the aggressive plans to build a mono-ethnic State. It was sad to listen to President Zelenskyy recommending, in an interview with the television channel Dom, to the residents of Donbas who "consider themselves Russian" to "go and find a place in Russia". What a pity that the Ukrainian leader fails to understand that by ignoring the cultural and historical rights of various groups in his country's population regardless of the areas in which they live, he is cementing the already quite deep dividing lines in Ukrainian society and is not contributing to a settlement of the internal Ukrainian crisis.

There is a good likelihood, it seems, that all those who do not swear allegiance to the policy of forced Ukrainization are fated to become "outcasts". The "advice" offered by the President was elaborated live on Channel 4 by the State Language Protection Commissioner, Taras Kremen. This official openly stated that it would be better for any inhabitant of the country who did not agree with Ukraine's existing linguistic legislation to "leave for other countries", where they would feel "more comfortable". What is this, if not a continuation of the cultural and linguistic war unleashed by the Ukrainian Government against its own population? What is this, if not an attempt to forcibly change the national and cultural identity of the inhabitants of Ukraine, who, by the way, are all formally conferred the same rights and responsibilities by the country's Constitution and legislation?

At the OSCE we have repeatedly pointed out in detail how the laws on education and the State language adopted by the Ukrainian authorities contravene both that country's domestic norms (in particular Articles 10, 22, 24 and 53 of the Constitution) and its obligations under international law, notably under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, among other instruments. We have also spoken about the recent abhorrent Law on the Indigenous Peoples of Ukraine, which lays claim to extraterritorial validity and implies an unequal political and legal status for different ethnic groups. It is high time for the Ukrainian Government to abandon its

irresponsible experiments and stop presenting its citizens with an artificial choice by foisting on them the image of Russia as an “existential threat”.

Meanwhile, the political settlement process is at a standstill. During Volodymyr Zelensky's presidency, not a single draft law aimed at the practical implementation of the Package of Measures has been put forward. The law on a special status for Donbas, technically extended for the current year, has not been implemented 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. These issues need to be discussed at the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), which should long since have resumed its face-to-face meetings in Minsk.

Instead, on 4 August, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the draft law “on the State policy of the transitional period”, which is aimed at purging the region of forces that are “disloyal” to the Ukrainian Government and, all in all, rules out the possibility of a political settlement on the basis of the Package of Measures. Not a word is to be found therein on a special status, linguistic rights or an amnesty. This instrument essentially nullifies the Ukrainian Government's own initiatives, that is, the road map proposed by Leonid Kravchuk at the TCG at the end of last year and the draft document entitled “Key clusters for implementation of the Minsk agreements” that was prepared by the Ukrainian Government on 19 January for the advisers to the leaders of the “Normandy format” countries.

The humanitarian situation in the east of Ukraine is deteriorating. It is the most unprotected and vulnerable population groups that are suffering the most under the policies of the Ukrainian authorities. In these conditions, Russia continues to provide humanitarian aid to the residents of Donbas, whom the Ukrainian Government has for many years been subjecting to a socio-economic and transport blockade, thereby essentially suffocating the region. For example, today, 12 August, the Russian Ministry for Civil Defence is sending the latest humanitarian convoy intended for certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions; it is carrying medicines that are essential during the coronavirus pandemic. Russia cannot ignore people who have been abandoned to their fate and whose only “fault” is that they want to live in dignity and speak Russian in spite of all the “outgrowths” of the anti-constitutional coup d'état of 2014.

The military situation in Donbas unfortunately remains tense. The reports by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) document an increase in ceasefire violations. On 9 August, as reported from Donetsk, residential areas were once again shelled by the Ukrainian armed forces. There were casualties among the civilian population. The instances recorded by the SMM monitors of heavy weapons in areas controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces being situated beyond the withdrawal lines but outside designated storage sites are alarming. This refers, in particular, to the three Osa surface-to-air missile systems spotted by the SMM in the settlements of Kalynove and Kasianivka on 4 and 5 August, respectively. In that context, there is a need for an appropriate reaction by the OSCE Chairmanship and the participating States to the violations that are being exposed. We would also remind you that the Mission has been tasked with monitoring, within the framework of its mandate, what is happening in the rest of Ukraine. Such information is clearly lacking in its reports.

In our view, it is time for the Ukrainian Government to put an end to its political shenanigans and sabotaging of the process for a peaceful settlement on the basis of the Package of Measures, which was endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202. We would caution that gambling on the build-up and concentration of military capability in Donbas to pave the way for a settlement of the conflict by force is fraught with the most lamentable consequences. It is deplorable that certain OSCE participating States are facilitating the development and military beefing up of the Ukrainian armed forces in every possible way. For example, a few days ago, they sent a group of military personnel to the Vinnytsia region

to take part in the latest round of exercises. Moreover, on 5 August, the international naval exercise “Dive 2021” involving NATO member countries and their partners, including Ukraine, got under way on the Black Sea. These activities are most certainly not aimed at implementation of the Minsk agreements. Evidently, some countries are willing to assume responsibility for the consequences of their protégés’ adventures. We would remind you of the SMM’s obligation to keep track of such exercises and to include information on them in its regular reports.

As for the calls that issued from the Ukrainian Government a few days ago – for example, from Deputy Prime Minister Oleksiy Reznikov – regarding its desire to have US air defence units deployed on the territory of Ukraine, this would be disastrous for Ukrainian statehood. The attempts to integrate Ukraine into foreign politico-military structures will cause that country, which has long been steered from outside, to lose its sovereignty for good.

To sum up. There is no military solution to the crisis in Ukraine. The conflict can and should be settled exclusively by political and diplomatic means on the basis of implementation of the Minsk agreements in their entirety, in the correct sequence and in a co-ordinated manner through direct dialogue between the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk.

Thank you for your attention.