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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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AT THE 1200th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 November 2018

**On the situation in Ukraine and the
need to implement the Minsk agreements**

Mr. Chairperson,

Radical Ukrainian nationalism is gaining ever more momentum, and the number of attacks on activists and politicians, journalists and Orthodox churches is growing. Criminal methods have become standard practice in politics. All of this is taking place with the full complicity, if not the support, of the authorities.

Attacks continue on canonical Orthodoxy. In the early hours of 5 November, the latest attempted arson attack on a church was reported in Odessa – this time the target was the bell tower of the church in honour of the icon of the Mother of God “Support of the Humble” at the Janusz Korczak children’s rehabilitation centre. Unfortunately, we are not seeing any effective measures by the Ukrainian law enforcement authorities to bring to justice those responsible for these and other acts of vandalism against Church property. It would appear that the radicals are inspired by the actions of the Ukrainian authorities, which actively interfere in Church affairs, pursuing their own political goals. It is quite obvious that Petro Poroshenko pushing the idea of creating a new Church structure in Ukraine has nothing to do with religious affairs, but merely deepens the already painful split in Ukrainian Orthodoxy and intensifies the conflicts within society.

Regional authorities, judges and journalists are coming under pressure from nationalists. On 1 November, radicals lit smoke bombs in front of the regional prosecutor’s office in Kherson and even broke into the building. On 4 November, they desecrated another memorial in Odessa. On the same day, Kateryna Handziuk, adviser to the mayor of Kherson and civic activist, died in hospital after having been doused in sulphuric acid by radicals on 31 July. New names of people who disagree with the policies of the authorities in Kyiv have been added to the pages of the Mirotvorets extremist website. As you will remember, several people whose details were previously listed on that website have already been killed.

Manifestations of Ukrainian radical nationalism go beyond the country’s borders. Today it can be encountered in the streets of peaceful European cities. People who have

nothing to do with politics suffer as a result. For example, on 2 November, two Ukrainian neo-Nazis, yelling xenophobic slogans, beat up a man in the Rome metro because of the way he looked. The attackers gave fascist salutes and shouted racist slogans. A woman who tried to help the victim was also injured. Today, neither the Ukrainian authorities nor the international community is in a hurry to put a stop to rampaging Ukrainian radical nationalists persecuting people in their country on the basis of their ethnic or linguistic identity. Feeling a sense of impunity, they are heading to other countries to establish their ranks there.

It is worth remembering the articles published earlier in the German magazine *Der Spiegel* (11 November 2017) and the British newspaper *The Guardian* (2 March 2018) on attempts by Ukrainian neo-Nazis to recruit young Europeans to fight in the war in Donbas. The founder of the Aidar nationalist battalion Serhiy Melnychuk spoke at the Vienna Diplomatic Academy on 18 May this year and asked for its political support.

All these trends are extremely worrying and require an immediate collective response. We are surprised by the OSCE participating States' silence on these subjects. Is politics being put ahead of principles? We await a thematic report on this topic from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM).

Authorities at various levels are adopting openly discriminatory legislation in favour of the nationalists. The policy of complete Ukrainization continues. On 6 November, a moratorium on the public use of Russian-language cultural works was imposed in the Ternopil region, following on from similar laws in the Lviv and Zhytomyr regions. These acts are in no way consistent with Ukraine's human rights commitments.

The Ukrainian Government is concealing large-scale human rights violations by clamping down on freedom of the media and persecuting undesirable journalists. Despite the serious concern expressed by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Harlem Désir, the term of pre-trial detention of the RIA Novosti Ukraine editor Kirill Vyshinsky, who was arrested simply for carrying out his professional duties as a journalist, has been extended once more. According to information provided by the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, the number of attacks on journalists in Ukraine increased by more than 200 per cent between May and August 2018.

The well-known Ukrainian human rights defender and head of the Institute of Legal Policy and Social Protection, Elena Berezhnaya, was hospitalized after Ukrainian Security Service officials raided her home. This unarmed woman was kicked in the stomach during the search. Ms. Berezhnaya was previously involved in organizing a peaceful rally near the monument to General Nikolay Vatutin in Kyiv. The OSCE usually responds promptly to cases of harassment of human rights defenders. Why the complete silence this time? It would appear that human rights defenders are being divided into "ours" and "theirs".

It is clear that the authorities in Kyiv have opted for a path of suppression of dissent and repression and have no desire for dialogue with their citizens either in Donbas or in other regions. In the run-up to the elections, the voices of the representatives of the "war party" are becoming ever louder. We see that the Ukrainian Government lacks the political will to adopt important decisions.

Against this background, the stagnation of the process to resolve the conflict in the east of the country is unsurprising. The Ukrainian Government continues to avoid implementing specific provisions of the Minsk Package of Measures. This obstructionist policy was demonstrated at the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) meeting on 6 November. The Ukrainian Government's negotiators once again refused to set out on paper the Steinmeier formula on the enactment of the law on the special status of Donbas – a key element of the political settlement. The inhabitants of Donbas are denied security guarantees. Rejecting amnesty and depriving citizens of the right to linguistic self-determination have been enshrined in law. This contravenes Ukraine's obligations under the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015.

The Ukrainian Government's actions are unlikely to stabilize the security situation. Implementation of the Framework Decision of 21 September 2016 on the Disengagement of Forces and Hardware in Stanytsia Luhanska, Petrivske and Zolote has been disrupted. On 6 November, the Ukrainian negotiators in Minsk rejected a proposal by the Donbas militia to issue a TCG statement on the need to eliminate all violations by the parties recorded by the SMM that are preventing this disengagement. The Ukrainian army continues to build up its forces and hardware at the line of contact and aggravate the situation in Donbas. According to the SMM, on 5 and 6 November, five houses were damaged in Staromykhailivka and one house in Dokuchaievsk. In both cases, the direction of fire would indicate that the Ukrainian armed forces were responsible. Between 1 and 6 November, the monitors spotted 18 units of Ukrainian military equipment in violation of the Minsk Package of Measures. On 3 November, ten new firing positions were identified on the eastern outskirts of Zolote-4, which is controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces. Between 2 and 4 November, the SMM reported firing by Ukrainian armed forces in the Stanytsia Luhanska disengagement area.

We trust that the OSCE will nevertheless send a signal to the Ukrainian Government regarding the need for immediate measures to de-escalate tension: disengagement of forces and hardware, withdrawal of weapons, publication of ceasefire orders, and disciplinary proceedings against those who violate them.

Unfortunately, the negotiations in the Working Groups on Economic and Humanitarian Issues in Minsk are deadlocked. Owing to the blockade imposed on Donbas by the Ukrainian Government and the checkpoint regime, people continue to die at the line of contact. On 4 November, a man had a stroke while waiting at a Ukrainian armed forces' checkpoint in Stanytsia Luhanska. On 31 October, an elderly man died on the wooden structure linking the parts of the bridge that were destroyed by Ukrainian security forces in Stanytsia Luhanska. Against this background, the Ukrainian negotiators are dragging their heels on the question of restoring the destroyed bridge. As for the negotiation process itself, the Ukrainian Government is simply going through the motions, having no interest in its outcome. At the meetings of the Working Groups on Humanitarian and Political Issues on 6 November, the Ukrainian side provided only one delegate, while key Ukrainian negotiators in the Working Group on Humanitarian Issues have now missed three meetings in a row. In these conditions there can be no progress in the exchange of detained persons, or in the payment of pensions, or in the matter of normalizing essential services in Donbas.

Mr. Chairperson,

Indulging the irresponsible policy of the Ukrainian leadership, which is keen to preserve its own power, makes the prospect of resolving the crisis in Ukraine less likely. The

settlement process must not become hostage to anyone's political ambitions. The Minsk Package of Measures, endorsed by UN Security Council resolution 2202, is the only internationally recognized framework for a peaceful settlement of the crisis in Ukraine and there is no alternative. There has to be a clear political signal from the OSCE regarding the need to implement all of its provisions.

Thank you for your attention.