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PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION IN UKRAINE

As delivered to
the Special Permanent Council,
Vienna, 31 January 2017

Mr. Chairman,

Nearly three years after the conflict in Donbas broke out, we had hoped that the need for extraordinary sessions of the Permanent Council was behind us. Regrettably, this is not the case, and we commend the Chairmanship for bringing us together at such short notice. The conflict in and around Ukraine rightly remains the most important and urgent issue for this Council.

Mr. Chairman,

Norway is deeply concerned by the recent escalation of hostilities in the vicinity of Avdiivka. As reported by the SMM and numerous news media, Minsk-proscribed weapon systems have again been used, including both MLRS and heavy artillery. This is clearly in breach of the Minsk agreements. We call on the parties to halt the fighting immediately. A sustainable ceasefire must be the first step toward comprehensive implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

This escalation of hostilities further exacerbates an already fragile humanitarian situation. We reiterate our call on all parties to fully cooperate with and provide unhindered access for humanitarian actors. In this regard, a special responsibility rests on Russia to use its considerable influence over the rebels in order to facilitate humanitarian relief work in the rebel held areas.

Furthermore, the OSCE SMM must be granted full, safe and unhindered access to all areas on both sides of the contact line in order to implement its mandate and report to the participating States. Unacceptable threats, intimidation and lack of cooperation with the SMM must end. We commend the mission for its efforts in a very challenging situation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.