

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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

Mr. Chairperson,

Tension is growing in Donbas. The Ukrainian security forces continue to flagrantly violate the provisions of the Minsk Package of Measures, beginning with Point 1, which stipulates an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire. The Ukrainian armed forces have resumed the daily shelling of militia-controlled towns and villages. Once again, there are casualties among the civilian population. On 13 October, as a result of a mortar strike on a residential building in Maryevka from government-controlled Zolote-4 to the north (as reported by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) in its report dated 16 October), two people were killed – 17-year-old Anastasia Kovtun and her 47-year-old mother. Anastasia was the 34th child to be killed by the Ukrainian security forces in certain areas of the Luhansk region since the start of the conflict. The OSCE Mission also observed fresh damage from heavy artillery shelling in residential districts of Yasynuvata, Oleksandrivka and Sakhanka. Artillery fire by the Ukrainian armed forces was recorded near Donetsk, Horlivka, Debaltseve, Stakhanov, Sakhanka and other major towns.

One has the impression that Ukraine is deliberately stoking tension. From an index map prepared by militia representatives to the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC) to investigate the firing at an SMM patrol on 10 October in Kamianka near the Donetsk filtration station, it is clear that the closest militia positions were 1,750 metres from the monitors, while the security forces were only a few hundred metres away. Given that the maximum range of a Kalashnikov assault rifle is less than a kilometre, it is obvious that the Ukrainian armed forces were responsible for firing these shots.

In violation of Point 2 of the Minsk Package of Measures, the Ukrainian armed forces are moving weapons closer to the line of contact. In addition to the transfer of 12 BUK surface-to-air missile systems and 10 Uragan multiple-launch rocket systems observed last week, between 10 and 14 October, 53 tanks and artillery guns were spotted at the railway station in Rubizhne, 31 howitzers and multiple-launch rocket systems at the station in Zachativka, 20 howitzers in Khlivodarivka, a BUK surface-to-air missile system in

Klishchiivka and heavy weaponry in other villages. The Ukrainian armed forces have resumed military aircraft flights over Donbas in violation of Point 7 of the Minsk Memorandum. On 15 October, SMM monitors observed a jet airplane flying over the entry-exit checkpoint on the line of contact to the north-west of the village of Pyshechyk.

The Ukrainian Government is cynically sabotaging the disengagement of forces and hardware, undermining the implementation of the relevant framework decision of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) of 21 September 2016. The Ukrainian armed forces did not even begin this process in Stanytsia Luhanska, although the OSCE Mission had already reported compliance with the necessary conditions on at least 55 occasions. At the TCG meeting in Minsk, the Ukrainian Government's representatives completely refused to agree on a date for the start of disengagement there. Ukrainian security forces are deliberately continuing to exacerbate the situation in the other two disengagement areas – Petrivske and Zolote. There is nothing left to indicate the disengagement that took place there earlier. According to the SMM monitors, the Ukrainian security forces have not simply moved deeper into these areas, but are also actively strengthening their positions there. Yet it was Ukraine that proposed precisely these villages as pilot disengagement areas. The Ukrainian armed forces' current activities, however, are likely to turn them into new hotspots.

On 12 October, an SMM camera recorded six projectiles in flight from west-north-west, where armed Ukrainian armed forces' personnel had been seen by the monitors earlier. On the same day, an SMM unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) spotted in the Petrivske disengagement area "well-maintained trenches near previously observed positions of the Ukrainian armed forces".

The Ukrainian Government's unwillingness to implement the provisions of the Package of Measures was made clear at the TCG meeting on 16 October, when the Ukrainian negotiators refused to discuss additional security measures. The militia representatives, on the other hand, were ready for constructive work on the proposals made by the SMM Chief Monitor Ertuğrul Apakan. If the ceasefire regime is to become stable, there needs to be a ban on the shelling of residential districts and critical civilian infrastructure facilities, weapons need to be withdrawn from the line of contact, the disengagement of forces completed in Stanytsia Luhanska, ceasefire orders published, and commando and sabotage activity prohibited.

Ukraine is blocking the work of the TCG Working Group on Humanitarian Issues, making progress in the exchange of detained persons impossible. On 16 October, the Ukrainian Government's representatives once again failed to attend the working group meeting. The activities of the Working Group on Economic Issues are at a standstill because of the position taken by the Ukrainian Government. Despite the ruling of the Ukrainian Supreme Court, the Ukrainian Government's negotiators refused on 16 October to resolve the issue regarding the payment of pensions to Donbas residents. Pensioners are still required to register regularly as internally displaced persons.

It is not only the actions but also the hawkish rhetoric of the Ukrainian leadership that is exacerbating tensions. On 11 October, during a meeting with commanders of Ukrainian armed forces units, the National Guard and the State border service in the Khmelnytski region, President Petro Poroshenko ordered the security forces to use "all forces and means" in return fire and also to be ready for offensive action. It is not difficult to imagine what this might turn into given that the Ukrainian security forces have moved heavy weaponry towards

the line of contact, including multiple-launch rocket systems. The Ukrainian President proposes using the example of supporters of fascism – Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych – to instil patriotism in the younger generation.

Some Western countries are also pouring oil onto the fire. The US Special Representative for Ukraine, Kurt Volker, is playing into the hands of the hawks in Kyiv with his statements arguing that the Donbas republics “have no place under the Minsk agreements” and that they “must disappear”. Obviously, to that end, he is willing to announce an increase in arms supplies to Ukraine. How does this correspond to US commitments under OSCE documents?

The Ukrainian security forces have already undermined numerous ceasefire agreements. The current “back-to-school ceasefire” is completely dependent on the restraint shown by the Ukrainian Government. But how long will this fragile peace last if, instead of working to resolve the crisis, Ukraine continues its threatening sabre-rattling, sabotaging its commitments and at the same time strangling Donbas with a blockade?

Mr. Chairperson,

We urge the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine to be more accurate and prompt in its transmission of facts. For example, in the Russian-language version of the report on the situation of 17 September posted on the OSCE website, the SMM confused Shyroke and Shyrokyne, and in the report dated 5 July 2017, the calibre of the Ukrainian self-propelled Pion gun was reduced considerably. In the weekly report of 28 August, there was a more than three-month delay in reporting the casualties of shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces in May and June. There are many such examples.

The SMM’s monitoring activity from the air is also in need of adjustment. The map of UAV flights presented by Alexander Hug during the briefing on 4 July testifies to the unequal monitoring on the different sides of the line of contact. Annexes to the SMM’s latest reports show that the situation has not changed since then.

The escalation at the line of contact is taking place against a backdrop of heightened political infighting as the Ukrainian presidential election draws closer. Petro Poroshenko is relying on the sympathies of the radicals. The idea of exclusivity is being promoted in all areas – from education to religion. Complete Ukrainization is being enshrined at the legislative level. The law on the State language adopted by the Verkhovna Rada at its first reading restricts the access of Russian-speaking Ukrainians to the labour market, education services, health care, culture and other areas. Under the threat of administrative and criminal liability, bans are imposed on the use of the native Russian language in places where it is used today. How does this tally with Ukraine’s human rights commitments? Do such initiatives increase the Donbas residents’ sympathies for the government in Kyiv?

The President of Ukraine is brutally interfering in the policy of Church affairs and personally deepening the divide in Ukrainian Orthodoxy. The last foundations of the stability of the multi-ethnic Ukrainian society are being uprooted. The authorities are pandering to the radical nationalists, who continue to attack members of the clergy and make plans for further seizures of canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church parishes. On 14 October, around 100 radicals near the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra (Cave Monastery) were on the verge of

committing another provocative act. We urge the SMM to record and report on all cases of violations of religious rights, and attacks on and seizures of Church property.

We see no signs of an appropriate response from the OSCE to the growth of radical nationalism in Ukraine. The SMM reported on a 15,000-strong march of nationalists in Kyiv timed to coincide with the anniversary of the founding of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, which is well known for its atrocities against the civilian population during the Second World War. It also reported an attempt by members of the National Corps to gain entry to an event held by a non-governmental organization in Kharkiv on 11 October, and an attack by members of the group C-14 on a female journalist in Kyiv on 10 October. On 14 October, vandals belonging to the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists once again attempted to remove the monument to General Nikolay Vatutin, who liberated Kyiv and died at the hands of Nazi accomplices. There is no point in delaying the release of an SMM report dedicated to manifestations of radical nationalism and neo-Nazism in Ukraine.

We also call on the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to closely monitor all attacks on journalists and restrictions on their rights. The trumped-up charges against the editor of RIA Novosti Ukraine, Kirill Vyshinsky, require close attention.

At the present time, it is extremely important not to allow tensions to escalate in Ukraine. I am referring not only to Ukraine's military operation in Donbas, but also to the exacerbation of national, ethnic and religious differences across the country. A collective signal needs to be sent to the Ukrainian Government that the multi-ethnic Ukrainian society cannot remain a hostage to anyone's political ambitions. Only direct dialogue among parties to the conflict and their strict implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures endorsed by the United Nations Security Council can guarantee the creation of conditions for a long-term and viable resolution of the crisis in Ukraine.

Thank you for your attention.