

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/612/21
29 April 2021

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1311th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

29 April 2021

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

Madam Chairperson,

In their statements at the Permanent Council last week, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group, Heidi Grau, and the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), Yaşar Halit Çevik, emphasized how the momentum in the process for settling the conflict in eastern Ukraine was unsatisfactory. The situation has been deadlocked for a long time. This was also confirmed by the meetings of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) and its working groups that took place on 27 and 28 April: not a single decision was agreed on at these meetings. Yet another round of negotiation opportunities has been allowed to go to waste.

This is above all due to the reluctance of the Ukrainian authorities to engage in direct and meaningful dialogue with the representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Such dialogue is stipulated by the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, which was endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202. The Ukrainian authorities are stubbornly refusing to reach agreements with those with whom they have been regularly meeting at the negotiating table over a number of years, be it at face-to-face meetings in Minsk or during videoconferences.

Recent pronouncements by Ukrainian officials testify to an almost complete repudiation of such contacts. Thus, communication between the Ukrainian Government and the current representatives of Donbas was categorically rejected by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba. The latter even referred to communication with the leaders of the republics proclaimed by the people of Donetsk and Luhansk as a “red line” that the Ukrainian Government, as he put it, was not prepared to cross. All this despite the fact that as far back as 11 March 2020 the Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, Andriy Yermak, who had been invested with all the necessary powers by President Zelenskyy, confirmed in writing that he accepted that the delegates sent by the aforementioned republics to the TCG were authorized representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

At the same time we are seeing attempts to derail the Minsk process altogether. On 26 April, the President of Ukraine stated in an interview with the *Financial Times* that the Ukrainian Government sought

to “change the Minsk format, adjust it” or “use some other format”. As one can see, the option of working effectively in the current negotiation configuration is no longer even being considered by the Ukrainian Government.

Ukraine’s leaders continue to express their desire to modify – in violation of United Nations Security Council resolution 2202 – the text of the Minsk agreements in order to make them “more flexible”. As is well known, what this is about is their rejection of the letter of the Package of Measures, which stipulates the sequence of steps for the organization of local elections as part of a political settlement.

Finally, instead of substantive work in the “Normandy configuration”, which is meant to facilitate progress at the TCG, the Ukrainian Government has begun to harp on about the need to expand the composition of the Normandy Quartet. In short, everything is being done to dilute the existing formats by creating some new discussion platforms and, in so doing, to downplay the necessity of implementing already established decisions. How does this square with the outcomes of the “Normandy format” summit held in Paris on 9 December 2019, where President Zelenskyy declared his commitment to the Minsk agreements, the “Normandy mechanism” and negotiations at the TCG?

Furthermore, in an interview with the Ukrainian television channel “4 Kanal” on 23 April, the head of Ukraine’s delegation to the TCG, Leonid Kravchuk, confirmed yet again that the Ukrainian Government was no longer considering Minsk as a venue for face-to-face meetings. We may rightly ask whether all this signifies a definitive, unilateral withdrawal by the Ukrainian Government from the Minsk agreements.

We also note with regret that the Ukrainian Government is pursuing its destructive course with the complete complicity and approval of its Normandy Quartet partners France and Germany. This striving to “bury” the Minsk process is not eliciting any sort of criticism in response. One cannot but draw an extremely sad parallel with the fate of the agreement concluded on 21 February 2014 with the mediation of France, Germany and Poland, which already the following day was trampled on by the participants in the coup d’état in Kyiv. Today, like then, the political sponsors of Ukraine’s current authorities are in no rush to send public signals to Kyiv concerning the need to implement agreements.

We can also see the Ukrainian leadership’s desire to divert attention from the situation in the east of the country, as reflected in its persistent propaganda-like attempts to shift the focus towards what is happening within the land and maritime borders of the Russian Federation. It is not surprising that in these circumstances the situation in Donbas is becoming even more deadlocked. In avoiding dialogue with the representatives of the region, the Ukrainian Government is gambling on preparations for a solution by force.

By the way, in an interview with *The Guardian* in March 2020, President Zelenskyy made a highly ambiguous statement to the effect that if the Minsk agreements were not rewritten within a year, then the Ukrainian Government might well abandon the Minsk process. Given the present context, it is evident that over the past year the Ukrainian authorities have not been seeking to implement the Package of Measures in accordance with its letter and spirit, but that, rather, they have been using this time to build up their military capacity in Donbas.

The Ukrainian armed forces continue to transport tanks and heavy weapons towards the line of contact. Attempts to ascribe this to the rotation of units are not convincing in view of the SMM’s observations. For example, on 21 April, the SMM monitors documented 43 tanks stationed, in violation of withdrawal lines, near the settlement of Pidlisne (Luhansk region). The SMM had previously not recorded tanks in that settlement, which means that it was not a case of rotation but of the deployment of newly arrived equipment. As is known, in the nearby city of Rubizhne there is a railway station through which dozens of pieces of equipment and weapons were transported. Why are the Ukrainian military provoking

tensions and concentrating forces in areas that are immediately adjacent to the line of contact and to the disengagement area in Zolote? We urge the Mission to carefully monitor such movements.

According to SMM data, the Ukrainian armed forces have continued in recent weeks to use the railway stations at Zachativka and Khibodarivka to transport equipment and weapons, including large-calibre weapons. Over the past two weeks, these stations have been caught on SMM cameras around 80 times. It is important not to reduce the intensity of monitoring. We are concerned by attempts to restrict the operations of the SMM's long-range unmanned aerial vehicles in the settlement of Stepanivka, which is situated near another railway station, namely that at Kostiantynivka behind the Ukrainian armed forces' lines. The Ukrainian military used that station too for the transport of weapons.

In addition, reports of the transfer of around ten Tochka-U tactical missile systems from Chernihiv to the Luhansk region have caused a considerable stir in Donbas. We expect the SMM to verify this information.

On 28 April, the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine reported on the conduct of drills for forward air controllers and combat control team helicopters in the zone of the "Joint Forces Operation" in the Donetsk region. As reported, the guiding of helicopters to their ground targets was practised during these drills. Yet, the use of "any types of aerial vehicles" is forbidden under the ceasefire-strengthening measures that came into force on 27 July 2020.

By ramping up tensions in Donbas, the Ukrainian authorities are evidently seeking to please the most radical segments of society, namely aggressive nationalists. They are continuing their policy of flirting with ultra-right movements. Thus, on 28 April, there took place in Kyiv and some cities in western Ukraine a number of events, supported by the local authorities, to mark the anniversary of the creation of the Ukrainian Waffen-SS Galicia Division. A neo-Nazi march was held in the central streets of Kyiv, with the police providing an escort. Its participants were shouting offensive and xenophobic slogans. We expect the SMM to duly reflect this in its reports.

It is telling that a week earlier, following a decision by the local authorities in Lviv, the Monument of Glory there – a memorial honouring those who vanquished Nazism in the Second World War – began to be dismantled.

To this day, several years later, many crimes committed in the name of Ukrainian national exclusivity after the February 2014 coup d'état remain unsolved. One such glaring example is the massacre of supporters of the development of local self-government that took place in Odessa on 2 May 2014. At the end of this week it will be the seventh anniversary of that terrible event. We shall talk further about this topic today separately.

Madam Chairperson,

It should be recalled that the "keys" to resolving the conflict in eastern Ukraine are held by the Ukrainian Government. There is a need to move away from the ratcheting up of military tension and to promote direct and responsible dialogue with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk. The crisis in Ukraine has no military solution and should be settled by political and diplomatic means through the swift implementation of the provisions of the Minsk Package of Measures in their entirety, in the correct sequence and in a co-ordinated manner.

Thank you for your attention.