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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1100th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

12 May 2016

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We are grateful for the information on the results of the meeting of the Normandy quartet foreign ministers in Berlin. This mechanism is highly important in facilitating the process of a peaceful settlement in Ukraine, but increasing the effectiveness of direct dialogue between the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk remains the key to success here.

I will elaborate on just a few details of the Berlin meeting. The momentum of that meeting should have accelerated the implementation of the Minsk agreements, to which there is no reasonable alternative. The Package of Measures was not signed in Minsk and endorsed by a United Nations Security Council resolution for it then to become “frozen”. Unfortunately, the Ukrainian authorities are constantly putting forward new pretexts for postponing the implementation of the agreement on harmonizing a package of political aspects of the settlement. The longer this process is drawn out, the more difficult it will be to reintegrate Donbas into the Ukrainian political and legal space.

Despite the fact that overall the security situation on the line of contact has improved, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) has reported intense skirmishes near Donetsk and in the Yasynuvata and Avdiivka area. We call for monitoring by the SMM in the security zone to be stepped up and normal conditions to be established for the work of the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination. In order to achieve a full ceasefire, it is essential to eliminate one of the causes of the escalation, namely the fact that the opposing sides' positions are moving dangerously close to one another. In some cases the distance between them is no more than 50 metres. The withdrawal of the Ukrainian security forces from occupied sites in former neutral territory – Pyschchevyk, Pavlopil, Vynohradne, Hnutove, Bakhmutivka, Zhovanko and also near Yasynuvata and Shyrokyne – would be a real sign of willingness on the part of the Ukrainian Government to engage in de-escalation.

There are conditions for rapid progress. New signals are also expected from the new Government in Kyiv. It is entirely realistic to agree on modalities for local elections in Donbas and amendments to the law on the special status of the region. It makes sense to do this in a single package.

Matters of constitutional reform are subject to agreement with both Donetsk and Luhansk. It is essential to implement the provision of the Package of Measures on ensuring pardon and amnesty by enacting the law prohibiting the prosecution and punishment of persons in connection with events that took place in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. We urge the parties to refrain from unilateral steps that only make it more difficult to move towards a settlement.

We expect the release of all persons who have been taken hostage during the conflict in Ukraine. It is important for negotiations on this matter to be conducted in good faith.

We recall that point 9 of the Package of Measures provides for reinstatement of full control of the State border by the Ukrainian Government throughout the conflict area, starting on day one after the local elections and ending after the comprehensive political settlement.

We once again call on our colleagues to use their significant influence on Kyiv. For our part, we shall continue to work with the representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions to the best of our ability. In order to achieve sustainable peace and stability in Ukraine, it is necessary to implement the Minsk Package of Measures as quickly as possible and to ensure that it is accompanied by comprehensive pan-Ukrainian dialogue among all sections of the population and all regions of the country.

The celebrations on Victory Day showed how great this unifying potential is for so many inhabitants of Ukraine. However, radicals are calling for 9 May to be made a working day and 2 May – the day of the Odessa tragedy – to be made a public holiday instead. They attack veterans, take away their banners and symbols of victory and burn them. We urge that all the necessary measures be taken to counter these extremists who portray themselves as patriots but in actual fact fan the flames of confrontation, calling for a solution involving the use of force. Indulging radical and nationalistic movements, especially paramilitary defence units like Azov, will further exacerbate the conflict.

In this context, we should like to draw particular attention to the publication of personal details about journalists accredited in Donbas on the Ukrainian Mirotvorets website, along with accusations that they are “co-operating with terrorists”. This is a blatant call for crimes to be committed against journalists, something which has unfortunately already become a common occurrence in present-day Ukraine. This is exactly what happened in the case of the journalist Oles Buzina, who was first included in the Mirotvorets list and then murdered. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović, has already issued a statement on this matter. We expect a clear and unequivocal response from the authorities in Kyiv. We are extremely surprised that the delegations which have spoken today chose to ignore this outrageous incident.

Thank you for your attention.