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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
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1325th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

22 July 2021

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

Mr. Chairperson,

Exactly one year ago, on 22 July 2020, the representatives of the central authorities of Ukraine and of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions reached agreement at the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) on measures to strengthen the ceasefire. These measures were meant to come into effect on 27 July 2020 on the basis of orders issued by the leadership of the Ukrainian armed forces and the leadership of the armed formations of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and they were to be complied with for the whole period until full comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

The representatives of Donbas immediately issued orders listing the aforementioned measures and published them in the media. Yet, a corresponding order by the leadership of the Ukrainian armed forces was never made public. Instead, the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine released some material in which the content and tenor of the measures were distorted. In particular, the provision was missing which stipulated that only retaliatory fire was permissible and only if ordered by the military leadership. It was not until slightly over eight months later that the Ukrainian Government's representatives acknowledged these discrepancies and, on 7 April this year, the material on the Ministry of Defence website was replaced with the full published text of the measures – though, again, there was no order. Despite this, the commanders of detachments of militarized Ukrainian nationalists along the line of contact “distinguished” themselves by statements (we have cited them in this room) to the effect that they would continue to open fire, and in particular be the first to do so, even during the ceasefire. Today tensions are clearly on a rising trend. All in all, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) has counted more than 45,800 such violations since the measures formally entered into force.

As illustrated by the meetings of the TCG and its Security Working Group, including the recent meetings on 20 and 21 July, the Ukrainian Government is deliberately ducking out of a discussion of practical mechanisms to ensure that the arrangements of 22 July 2020 are implemented. One of the key provisions is not being put into practice, namely the creation and involvement of a co-ordination mechanism for responding to ceasefire violations through the facilitation of the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination in its current setting. Such a mechanism presupposes direct dialogue between the

representatives of the Ukrainian armed forces and of the armed formations of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions – something that the Ukrainian Government is categorically avoiding.

The very first paragraph of the measures is also being violated, that is, the provision banning offensive, reconnaissance and sabotage operations. We recall that, on 11 June, an observation post of the Luhansk militia near the settlement of Holubivske was attacked, as a result of which five people were killed. On 21 June, four members of the Donetsk militia perished and five were wounded near the settlements of Lozove and Staromykhailivka (in certain areas of the Donetsk region) as a result of an ambulance convoy coming under a mortar attack followed by shelling with a grenade launcher. These incidents could lead to a serious military escalation.

On 16 July, an explosion occurred at a civilian infrastructure facility, namely a medium-pressure gas pipeline, in the area of the Mushketove railway station in Donetsk, leading to disruptions in the supply of gas to 14 residential apartment buildings and 112 homesteads nearby. The leadership of certain areas of the Donetsk region issued a statement on how the damaging of this critical public facility was an act of sabotage. We are surprised that this explosion has not been covered by the SMM. We call on the Mission to monitor and provide information, in line with its mandate, on incidents that have an impact on the security of the civilian population.

Incidentally, agreeing on ceasefire-strengthening measures is one of the steps taken by the TCG in line with the recommendations from the “Normandy format” summit held in Paris on 9 December 2019. In the common agreed conclusions from the summit it was also emphasized that efforts should be undertaken simultaneously to implement the political aspects of the Minsk agreements.

The outcome document refers very specifically to the need to incorporate the “Steinmeier formula” (the text of which was agreed on at the TCG) into Ukrainian legislation. More than 18 months after the summit, that has yet to be done. The information policy adviser to the Ukrainian delegation to the TCG, Oleksiy Arestovych, recently confirmed in public that the Ukrainian Government actually had no intention at all of doing anything about it. When asked about the fate of the arrangements under the “Steinmeier formula” during an interview with the UkrLife channel on 15 July, he literally stated the following: “We’re not going to do or implement anything.” After that he proposed “trading,” as he put it, “implementation of the formula” in exchange for certain special security guarantees for Ukraine.

Unfortunately, the Ukrainian Government’s overt torpedoing of the arrangements agreed on at the TCG and of the Minsk agreements in general is not eliciting any criticism whatsoever on the part of the foreign “minders” and political sponsors of the current Ukrainian authorities. Their attempts over many years, using casuistic subterfuges of various kinds, to avoid implementing the Minsk Package and to replace Donbas with Russia as a party to the conflict are driving discussions both in the Normandy format and at the TCG into a dead end.

In that regard, the OSCE has a special role to play in facilitating dialogue between the real parties to the conflict, that is, the parties who have obligations under the Minsk agreements. It is on the effectiveness of contacts between these parties that the fate of the settlement process actually hinges in all its aspects – at the security, political, socio-economic and humanitarian level. We urge the distinguished Ambassador Mikko Kinnunen, who is succeeding Ambassador Heidi Grau as Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the TCG, and also all the co-ordinators of the TCG’s working groups to support such direct dialogue in every possible way. Attempts to revive the discussion on who the parties to the conflict are – a discussion that was wrapped up in 2015 with the signing of the Package of Measures – are dangerous and futile.

In addition to the exertions by the Ukrainian Government to distort the letter and the spirit of the Minsk agreements, we may observe how instead of seeking comprehensive agreement on all aspects of the settlement process, individual issues are proposed for discussion that have been ripped out of the context and logic of that process. At the same time, the key issue of a special status for Donbas within Ukraine – the fundamental element of a comprehensive political settlement – is being shunted out.

Against this backdrop, several of the foreign partners of the current Ukrainian leadership continue to stoke up the belligerent aspirations of the hotheads in Kyiv. On 10 July, the joint military exercise “Sea Breeze” concluded. The exercises “Cossack Mace” and “Three Swords” will last until the end of this month; they involve, among other things, practising offensive operations, including “fighting in urban areas”. While effectively propping up the illusion about the Ukrainian Government’s ability to resolve the conflict militarily, its foreign “minders” are in no rush to exhort the authorities in Kyiv to fulfil what was endorsed by the United Nations Security Council in its resolution 2202. They consequently bear their share of the blame for the deterioration of the situation and all further violence. It is not surprising that, in these circumstances, many representatives of the politico-military leadership of Ukraine see in the intensification of military co-operation with the NATO States a sign of approval by the latter for the policy of striving to sabotage the Minsk agreements.

We would emphasize that the crisis in Ukraine can and should be resolved exclusively by peaceful means on the basis of the Minsk agreements through direct dialogue between the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk. Given the lack of political will on the part of the Ukrainian Government to make progress in the TCG’s work, its attempts to deflect attention through politicized and propagandistic fabrications about some sort of external “aggression” and “occupation” are making the prospect of achieving peace and social harmony in Ukraine seem ever more remote.

Thank you for your attention.