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**STATEMENT BY  
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1349th MEETING OF THE OSCE  
PERMANENT COUNCIL**

16 December 2021

**In response to the address by  
the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer**

Mr. Maurer,

We are pleased to welcome you once again to the Permanent Council and thank you for your informative presentation.

Russia pays great attention to its partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Our co-operation is traditionally of a constructive and fruitful nature. The professionalism, motivation and impartiality of your staff are the key to the successful realization of the noble tasks ahead of the Committee. We commend the courage and selflessness of all those who find themselves on the front line, especially in the face of the unrelenting coronavirus pandemic.

Against this backdrop, we note how important the work of the Red Cross is for a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In close co-ordination with the Russian peacekeeping contingent deployed there in accordance with the trilateral statement by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia of 9 November 2020, targeted work is being carried out in response to humanitarian challenges, including the search for missing persons and for the remains of the dead. There is co-operation both with the command of the Russian peacekeepers and with the officers and soldiers on the ground. In accordance with the decision of the Government of the Russian Federation, a voluntary contribution worth 2 million Swiss francs was made to the ICRC budget at the end of 2020 to finance the costs related to the measures taken to offset the impact of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The internal conflict in eastern Ukraine remains a critical humanitarian crisis in the OSCE area. Unfortunately, no progress is being observed in the settlement process owing to the complete lack of political will in Kyiv to engage in direct dialogue with the other party to the conflict, namely Donbas. We note the consistent efforts of the Red Cross to help the millions of residents of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions suffering hardship because of the inhumane blockade imposed by the Ukrainian Government. Apart from Russian humanitarian convoys, the Committee's assistance is one of the few sources of essential supplies for the people of the region.

The Ukrainian authorities must fulfil their obligations under paragraph 8 of the Minsk Package of Measures and ensure direct payment of pensions and welfare benefits to the residents of certain areas, including population groups with reduced mobility. The relevant solutions should be found in dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk. Overall, of course, what is needed is a complete restoration of the severed socio-economic ties.

We welcome the fact that the Committee has been able to establish the possibility of transporting humanitarian goods to the Luhansk region through the Shchastia checkpoint on the line of contact. Regular, safe use by the ICRC of this shortest route to Luhansk could set an example for other international operations, including the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine.

Continued attention needs to be paid to the problems of Donbas's unified water distribution network, which has been disrupted by the fighting. With the assistance of the Red Cross, a functioning, albeit intermittent, cash payment mechanism for water supplies to the Luhansk region has been established. Unfortunately, the issue of payments for the water supply in the Donetsk region has not yet been resolved. Of course, it would be in the interests of the local population if such supplies and payment for them were based on intelligible contracts with clear terms and conditions. As for non-cash payment for water, the ball is still in the Ukrainian Government's court.

We pay tribute to the ICRC's desire to create an effective mechanism for finding persons who have gone missing during the course of the conflict in Donbas. The preparations for further exchanges of detainees between the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk and assistance in humanitarian demining also need to be stepped up. We note your personal efforts, Mr. Maurer, in that regard undertaken during your visit to Ukraine in November 2020.

In closing, we should like to wish all the ICRC staff the best of health and every success in achieving their lofty goals. At the Ninth Moscow Conference on International Security held in June of this year, you, Mr. Maurer, rightly spoke of the need to act in concert in the face of the changing dynamics of today's world. This is an extremely important and timely appeal. Let me assure you of Russia's continued support for the Committee's endeavours, which will contribute to co-operation, peace and security.

Thank you for your attention.