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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1112th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 September 2016

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the agreement on the ceasefire in Donbas starting on 1 September to coincide with the start of the new school year. We call on the parties to the conflict to make every effort to observe the silence regime and ensure that it is indefinite and stable.

We trust that agreements on the disengagement of the parties' forces and demilitarization of the first areas on the line of contact will be reached in the near future anyway. We are disappointed at the unconstructive position taken by Ukraine at the Trilateral Contact Group meeting in Minsk.

The existing agreements on the withdrawal of weapons, demining and suspension of firing exercises in the security zone must be implemented.

We welcome the efforts of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) to monitor the situation first and foremost in the security zone. This is exactly where the monitors' efforts should be focused.

We regard the SMM's work as an important element in restraining the parties. Extending the Mission's capabilities to work at night will help to increase its effectiveness. We support the SMM's efforts to establish further contacts with the local authorities that control the situation in the region. This would make it easier to solve practical issues concerning the SMM's work, including freedom of movement.

As we can see from the SMM's reports, the monitors regularly visit the border areas of Ukraine to conduct monitoring. We fail to see any added value in expanding the monitoring in the border zones, as opposed to monitoring in areas adjacent to the line of contact.

We note the increased level of co-operation between the monitors and Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC) personnel. We agree that there is a need to improve its effectiveness and make sure that it really is joint, *inter alia* through the drafting of regulations for the JCCC and the involvement of representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in its work.

Given the truce, it is extremely important to avoid any possibility of provocation. Confidence-building measures such as direct telephone contacts between the unit commanders on both sides of the line of contact, for example, would be very useful to that end.

Unfortunately, despite the silence regime, sporadic exchanges of artillery fire continue to occur in Donbas. Mortar shelling has been reported at Donetsk airport, in Yasynuvata, the Petrovsky district of Donetsk, Trudivske village, at the Zasyadko coal mine, in Sakhanka village, on the outskirts of Dokuchaievsk and in Kominternove. There has also been sniper fire, as a result of which civilians in Donetsk have suffered since 1 September. The Ukrainian military presence in the security zone continues to grow. The SMM has reported the massing of Ukrainian weapons just beyond the withdrawal lines: more than 30 howitzers, multiple-launch rocket systems and tanks. A consignment of 18 tanks, 11 guns, 6 multiple-launch rocket systems and 6 surface-to-air missile systems was spotted at the Melioratyvne train station in the Dnipropetrovsk region, through which the Ukrainian army is supplied from the rear. All this indicates that the Ukrainian armed forces are standing by to switch to an active phase of combat operations at any moment.

Implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures in good faith, including the entire set of political commitments, remains the key to a peaceful settlement of the Ukrainian crisis. We see no alternative to that agreement. However, because of the position taken by the Ukrainian Government even the negotiations on the political aspects of a settlement have reached a stalemate. At the same time, we have seen a systematic increase in shelling in the conflict zone and other provocative actions, even beyond the borders of Donbas.

We would recall that the process of restoring the Ukrainian Government's control over the segment of the Ukrainian-Russian border cannot begin until local elections have been held in Donbas. The attempts to alter the Minsk agreements and establish additional conditions for the political settlement process, which includes not only the question of elections but also an amnesty, the release of detained persons and constitutional reform, are unacceptable.

The documents needed for the implementation of the political aspects of the Package of Measures could be adopted at the opening session of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Ukraine needs to show the necessary will, agreeing on the full set of documents with the representatives of Donbas as stipulated in the Package of Measures and then passing it in parliament. It would be unwise to squander this opportunity.

We would also recall that security-building measures and political steps need to be synchronized. We trust that the silence regime in Donbas will lead to more constructive work in the Contact Group. We still believe the consultations in the Normandy format to be relevant in facilitating dialogue in the Contact Group, but this should not be a substitute for the work being done in Minsk.

Distinguished colleagues,

The SMM's mandate covers not only the territory of Donbas but also the other regions of Ukraine, where the situation as regards the observance of human rights requires close attention.

Since the very beginning of the conflict we have referred to the blatant criminal excesses by nationalistic groups and the arbitrary actions of the security bodies pandering to them. However, it is only recently that international non-governmental organizations have begun to deal with this problem anyhow, which contributed to the release of 13 political prisoners from so-called secret prisons of the Ukrainian Security Service.

The practice of prolonged and arbitrary detention of civilians, including women, has become routine in Ukraine. Civilians who are being secretly and illegally held at Ukrainian Security Service facilities are subjected to torture and inhuman and degrading treatment (including beatings, use of electric shocks, threats of rape, and shootings and reprisals against family members), denied access to medical assistance and a lawyer, and cut off from contact with relatives and the outside world.

The Ukrainian authorities need to take real steps to establish all the facts of the illegal detentions and custody, investigate these cases and bring the guilty parties to justice.

We demand unhindered consular access to all Russian citizens detained and held in custody in Ukraine without due notification of Russian diplomatic and consular offices.

We expect direct action in this regard from the OSCE as well, including the SMM. There has been much talk here about freedom of movement for the SMM monitors. Our Ukrainian colleague recently expressed in this room the willingness of the Ukrainian authorities to provide full assistance in this matter. We assume that the monitors will be ensured access to all persons detained by the Ukrainian security forces.

Unfortunately, there is as yet no accurate list of these prisoners, not all of the missing persons have relatives, and many are afraid to speak about this as they fear harassment from the Ukrainian security forces. In the meantime, the SMM can turn to the list drawn up, for example, by the Save Ukraine Committee, which because of such concern about the fate of Ukrainian political prisoners has been included in the United States sanctions list. Evidently, they like only a certain kind of human rights activist in Washington.

We have noted the response by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to the arson attack on the Inter television station. We hear different versions of events from the Ukrainian Government, ranging to claims that the journalists set fire to the building themselves. The death of the journalist Pavel Sheremet is a stark reminder that Ukraine remains an extremely dangerous place for journalists.

We hope that this most recent incident will prompt the Ukrainian authorities to tackle in earnest the problem of radical Ukrainian nationalists, who remain one of the chief obstacles to the establishment of peace and harmony in Ukraine.

Thank you for your attention.