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**STATEMENT BY MR. DMITRY BALAKIN,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN
FEDERATION, AT THE 1199th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 November 2018

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation in Donbas remains extremely difficult. The Ukrainian leadership continues its policy of resolving the internal conflict by force, openly sabotaging the implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures. This is clearly reflected in the reports by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM).

At the same time, there is unprecedented pressure on the Mission to present the facts in a way that is convenient for the Ukrainian leadership and the countries supporting it. SMM Principal Deputy Chief Monitor Alexander Hug was subjected to harsh criticism in the light of his statement in an interview with the US publication *Foreign Policy* that the SMM had not seen direct evidence of a Russian presence in south-eastern Ukraine. What is more, they even tried to edit what he had said. Whatever happened to freedom of speech?

The Ukrainian armed forces have intensified their shelling of Donbas. According to the SMM, on 26 October, the Trudivski residential neighbourhood in the suburbs of Donetsk came under fire from west-south-west, resulting in damage to a two-storey house. We once again urge the SMM to prepare a thematic report on the shelling, destruction and casualties in Donbas since the start of the conflict.

The Ukrainian Government continues to move weapons closer to the line of contact. Over the past week, the SMM spotted more than two dozen units of military equipment belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces in violation of the Package of Measures, and the transfer of howitzers and electronic warfare systems via the railway station in Rubizhne. The monitors saw foreign weapon models near Sievierodonetsk, including an AN/TPQ-36 mobile counter-battery radar system manufactured in the United States of America. For what purpose were these weapons, just like the BUK surface-to-air missile systems reported earlier, sent to Donbas?

The Ukrainian armed forces are blocking the disengagement of forces and hardware in Stanytsia Luhanska, although the SMM had reported on the seven-day complete ceasefire needed to start the disengagement on at least 55 occasions. Ukrainian security forces have occupied the disengagement areas in Zolote and Petrivske in violation of the Trilateral Contact Group Framework Decision of 21 September 2016 and are actively strengthening their positions there – from digging new trenches to strengthening the Ukrainian armed forces' positions with personnel and equipment. All this has been repeatedly confirmed in the SMM's reports.

Additional de-escalation measures need to be adopted to ensure a lasting ceasefire. First and foremost, this means prohibiting the shelling of populated areas and promulgating the orders for a ceasefire. The representatives of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) have done this, but the authorities in Kyiv are refusing to do so. Do the Ukrainian security forces even have such orders?

Owing to the obstructive position taken by the Ukrainian Government, the implementation of the political provisions of the Package of Measures has been stalled for a long time. The Ukrainian negotiators are stubbornly refusing to set out on paper the Steinmeier formula, which provides for the holding of local elections and a law on special status. Legislative acts are being adopted that directly contravene the Minsk agreements. The Law on Reintegration makes Point 5 of the Package of Measures on an amnesty null and void, and the Law on Education contravenes Point 11 on the special status taking into account the right to linguistic self-determination. The Verkhovna Rada adopted the draft law on the State language at its first reading. This provides for the complete Ukrainization of all spheres of public life.

Against this background, the accusations made against Russia in connection with the forthcoming elections in the DPR and LPR on 11 November in the open briefing at the United Nations Security Council on 30 October appear hypocritical. The Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk have obligations under the Package of Measures, but Russia does not. The Ukrainian Government is blocking the advancement of a political settlement, making it impossible to hold local elections in Donbas in line with the Minsk Package of Measures. In these circumstances, especially following the murder of Alexander Zakharchenko, there was simply no other option in Donetsk and Luhansk than to call elections so as to avoid a "power vacuum" and ensure the normal functioning of the region, given the continuing blockade and threats from the authorities in Kyiv. The members of the UN Security Council were invited to hear a representative from Luhansk responsible for organizing and holding the elections. However, the opinion of the inhabitants of Donbas was unfortunately never heard because some of our Western partners blocked this statement.

The Ukrainian authorities are carefully trying to conceal their failure to implement the Package of Measures behind anti-Russian propaganda, which is a convenient instrument for them during the election campaign. They hide all their domestic policy failures behind the screen of Russophobia. They have made Ukraine's Russian-speaking population, the national minorities living in Ukraine, journalists and the Church hostages to their aggressive policy. The observance of human rights in Ukraine is deteriorating noticeably. The Ukrainian Government's policy of total Ukrainization is restricting the country's non-Ukrainian-speaking citizens' access to education, culture, justice, the media and even everyday services. Things have got to the point that there are legislative attempts to introduce "language patrols and inspections" and fines simply for using the Russian language. The draft

law on ensuring the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the State language adopted by the Verkhovna Rada at its first reading conflicts with Article 10 of the Ukrainian Constitution and any number of commitments by the Ukrainian Government under international law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Concluding Document of the CSCE Vienna Meeting of 1986, the Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE of 1990, and the Report of the CSCE Meeting of Experts on National Minorities of 1991. Recently, the consequences of Ukrainization were felt by the inhabitants of the Zhytomyr region, where the regional authorities introduced a ban on the Russian language, not to mention a host of similar decisions adopted earlier by the local authorities in western Ukraine.

The authorities' interference in Church affairs runs the risk of creating religious conflicts in Ukrainian society and a schism in orthodoxy. Criminal acts by radicals against churches and members of the clergy continue to go unpunished. The latest incident took place in the Lviv region on 25 October, when the Church of the Holy Prince Vladimir had leaflets pasted to its walls for the deliberate purpose of kindling religious antagonism.

Radical nationalism is sweeping through Ukraine. There have already been comments about the OSCE on the pages of the Mirotvorets website, by means of which dissidents are hounded, and the "death lists" include members of the press and even foreign diplomats. The connivance of the Ukrainian authorities and foreign countries with the extremists' activities is cause for major concern. It has reached the point where a representative of the neo-Nazi group C14 spoke at America House in Kyiv (the centre for American culture, education and information) in front of a US flag, boasting how Kyiv railway station had been "cleansed" of Roma in co-operation with the city police. Nationalists are already putting up anti-Hungarian posters in Zakarpattia.

The European Parliament has also drawn attention to crimes by members of radical organizations such as Carpathian Sich, the Azov regiment of the National Guard, Right Sector and C14. It has adopted a resolution condemning manifestations of fascism, racism and xenophobia. Why does the OSCE remain silent on this topic? We urge the SMM finally to prepare a thematic report on this subject.

The discriminatory policy against the Russian-speaking population includes the suppression of freedom of speech and the persecution of journalists by the Ukrainian authorities. On 29 October, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir, expressed serious concern over the continuing pre-trial detention of the RIA Novosti editor Kirill Vyshinsky, saying that under no circumstances should journalists be targeted in retaliation for their work. We share these assessments and demand Mr. Vyshinsky's immediate release.

The current Ukrainian leadership's policy is ruinous for Ukraine. It is not conducive to achieving national unity and harmony or to resolving existing social differences. A lasting settlement of the internal Ukrainian crisis can be achieved only on the basis of direct, mutually respectful and constructive dialogue between the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk, as stipulated in the Minsk Package of Measures endorsed by UN Security Council resolution 2202 of 17 February 2015. We need to ensure the implementation of its provisions fully and in a co-ordinated manner.

Thank you for your attention.