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PC.DEL/994/19
5 September 2019

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1239th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

5 September 2019

**In response to the reports by the Special Representative of the
OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group,
Mr. Martin Sajdik, and the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to
Ukraine, Mr. Yaşar Halit Çevik**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are pleased to welcome the distinguished Ambassadors Martin Sajdik and Yaşar Halit Çevik to the OSCE Permanent Council, and thank them for the reports they have presented.

We share the assessments that we have just heard about the “bread truce”, which entered into force on 21 July 2019, having contributed to de-escalation in Donbas. It is true that there has been a noticeable decrease in military tension. However, the situation remains far from ideal. The shooting has not stopped. There are civilian casualties. Military equipment continues to be deployed in violation of the withdrawal lines, including heavy weaponry. It can be seen from the reports of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) that to date since the beginning of the truce the amount of Ukrainian armed forces’ military equipment missing from their storage sites is more than treble the figures for missing militia equipment. There are hundreds of new ceasefire violations each day. Residential buildings and public facilities, including schools in Horlivka and Mykhailivka, have been damaged again. Over the past week alone, as a result of the shelling of the territory of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, Culture Houses suffered serious damage in the settlements of Holubivske (SMM report dated 29 August) and Kominternove (SMM report dated 2 September). We would remind you of the need for the SMM’s data on civilian casualties and on the destruction of civilian infrastructure facilities to be catalogued in a thematic report.

Unfortunately, a number of Ukrainian armed forces’ units have used the truce as an opportunity for strengthening their positions, and in some places even for further advances. On 14 August, the SMM spotted a new military position of the Ukrainian armed forces (SMM report dated 15 August) just 200 metres west of the Donetsk filtration station, i.e., in the “grey zone”. It was located on the road leading to the filtration station. This exposes the station’s staff to even greater danger as they travel along this road every day.

At the same time, there are also some positive developments. The demining of the approach roads to the destroyed part of the bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska and the dismantling of the two sides’ fortification infrastructure pave the way for work to begin on repairing the bridge. The procedures for co-operation

between the sides in preparing and carrying out such repairs should be agreed upon in the relevant working group of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG). There are already examples of direct co-operation – the joint inspections on 22 and 29 August and 2 September by representatives of the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Luhansk of the results of the demining work near the bridge. In addition, civilian engineers representing the Ukrainian Government and the Luhansk authorities jointly carried out a visual assessment of the structural condition of the destroyed part of the bridge on 29 August. We call on the distinguished Ambassadors Sajdik and Çevik to help facilitate further instances of this kind of direct co-operation.

Impetus needs to be given to the prompt completion of disengagement in the other agreed areas – in Zolote and Petrivske, where the situation remains anything but stable. Military equipment belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces has been spotted there on numerous occasions over the past two weeks. More than a dozen ceasefire violations have been recorded inside the Zolote area and almost 200 within its five-kilometre periphery.

Given the current domestic political transformations in Ukraine, many are hopeful that there will also be a change in the Ukrainian Government's attitude towards Donbas. The window of opportunity that is opening now allows the new Ukrainian leadership to move away from the bellicose rhetoric and the build-up of military tension that were widely practised by the previous authorities.

Other long-overdue priority measures include the lifting of the blockade of Donbas and the restoration of socio-economic ties and transport links, as stipulated in Point 8 of the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015. The restrictions imposed by the Ukrainian Government affect, first and foremost, the most vulnerable sections of society. Pensioners and other people entitled to benefits are still forced to make hazardous journeys across the line of contact if they want to collect the money due to them.

The situation regarding temporarily internally displaced persons (IDPs) in territories controlled by the Ukrainian Government is also a matter of concern. The SMM has reported of the plans afoot to close IDP centres in Kharkiv, Zhytomyr and Sloviansk by the end of the year. Hundreds of people, many of whom became homeless as a result of the Ukrainian Government's military operations in Donbas, are at risk of losing the roof over their head once again.

Mr. Sajdik,

The changes in the Ukrainian Government offer opportunities for stepping up negotiations in the TCG and its working groups on all aspects of a settlement. We commend your efforts to co-ordinate these negotiations. We expect, among other things, a speedy formalization in writing in the TCG of the "Steinmeier formula" on the procedure for the entry into force of a law on the special status of Donbas. This will also make it possible to develop other contacts for resolving the crisis in Ukraine. The need for the implementation of the existing agreements was also confirmed during the meeting in Berlin on 2 September of the foreign policy advisers from the "Normandy Quartet" countries.

Mr. Çevik,

Despite the current truce, the SMM monitors continue to work in extremely difficult conditions. Over the past two weeks, the Ukrainian armed forces have repeatedly taken measures to directly obstruct the SMM monitoring that pose an immediate threat to the life and safety of the monitors. We condemn the shelling by Ukrainian security forces of two SMM patrols on the north-eastern outskirts of the settlement of Kominternove on 1 and 4 September (SMM spot reports were issued in connection with this shelling). Shells and bullets were whizzing through the air at a distance of 25 to 30 metres from the Mission staff. It was a miracle that no one was injured in these two incidents.

Another outrageous incident concerns the situation in the settlement of Shchastia in the Luhansk region. On 30 August, SMM monitors were using an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) to monitor military activity near Ukrainian armed forces' positions close to the bridge there. At a Ukrainian armed forces' checkpoint, it was not only demanded that they delete the material recorded by the UAV in exchange for their freedom of movement, but they were in fact illegally detained for two hours. In the SMM report dated 31 August, the Mission describes what happened as "denial of access". However, this kind of incident involving interference in the Mission's work and threats to the physical safety of the monitors warrants a separate spot report. We urge Ukraine to refrain from pressuring and threatening the Mission and from trying to tamper with its equipment.

The situation in the rest of Ukraine also remains difficult. Events surrounding the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), the rights of national minorities and freedom of the media should remain within the SMM's focus. On 25 August, the UOC Church of St. Boris and St. Gleb in Kryvyi Rih in the Dnipro region burned down completely. On 4 September, supporters of the new ecclesiastical structure created by the previous political leadership of Ukraine entered the grounds of the UOC Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in the village of Malyn in the Rivne region after having cut the locks and then instigated a fight with parishioners of that church. On 28 August, there was an attack on a camera team from the Ukrainian national television channel in the settlement of Zolochiv in the Kharkiv region. Information on these incidents and their consequences has not, as yet, been reflected in the Mission's reports. We urge the SMM to pay close attention to such incidents. The consequences of the implementation of new legislation introduced by the previous authorities also need to be monitored. This concerns, among other things, the entry into force on 16 July of the law on the State language, and various aspects regarding the implementation of the Education Act. There is a need for a thematic report on the manifestations of aggressive nationalism, xenophobia and neo-Nazism that have occurred in Ukraine.

Finally, the new political team that has come to power in Ukraine has repeatedly expressed its desire to work towards peace in Donbas. The days ahead will be a test of their ability to take a responsible approach to this matter. Success will depend directly on the new team's political will to achieve results not in words but in practice. It should be understood that it is not so much new summits that will bring us closer to peace but the ability and readiness of the Ukrainian Government to implement in practice the agreements reached.

On the day he assumed office, the new Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Vadym Prystaiko, made a remarkable comment. He said that in the current conditions it was "not so important" how the Ukrainian Government would achieve peace in Donbas – either through some kind of peacekeeping mission "or by fulfilling the Minsk agreements". We should like to caution against such a frivolous interpretation by the Ukrainian Government of their existing commitments. We recall time and again that the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, which was signed by the representative of Ukraine, remains the sole framework for a settlement of the internal Ukrainian crisis. It was endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202 and sets out the necessary steps for achieving a peaceful, political, diplomatic and – most importantly – viable settlement. The situation taking shape now allows the Ukrainian Government to start a completely fresh page in its relations with Donbas. We urge Ukraine to use this chance to launch a multilateral and respectful dialogue with the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk.

Thank you for your attention.