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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1224th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 April 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 by the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission
to Ukraine, Mr. Ertuğrul Apakan**

Mr. Chairperson,

Allow me to welcome the distinguished Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan and the representative of Ambassador Martin Sajdik, Mr. Rémi Duflot, to the OSCE Permanent Council meeting and thank them for their reports. We welcome the decision on the extension of the mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) and the adoption of the Mission's budget. It was adopted against the backdrop of Ukraine's attempts to restrict the SMM's opportunities for monitoring and supporting respect for human rights, including the rights of national minorities (which, incidentally, is also stipulated by the SMM's mandate). We assume that the compromise formula proposed by the Slovak Chairmanship that provides for a strengthening of the SMM's human rights "wing" will facilitate the Mission's effective monitoring in this field.

The domestic political turbulence in the presidential election campaign and the associated risks require increased monitoring of the situation in Ukraine. For now the situation is depressing. We share the worrying assessments about the unsatisfactory situation in Donbas. The "spring truce" agreed upon in the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) a month ago did not lead to a sustainable ceasefire. There was only a short-term positive effect, as large-calibre artillery prohibited by the Minsk agreements began to be used less frequently. However, the shelling continues in Donbas, resulting in fresh casualties and destruction. Since 11 March, the intensity of the shelling has returned to the pre-truce levels.

Civilian infrastructure facilities remain the usual targets for the Ukrainian military. Residential buildings, schools and social facilities find themselves under attack. An 81-year-old civilian and her 12-year-old great-grandson were injured as a result of shelling in the village of Frunze last week. Also as a result of Ukrainian shelling in March a civilian was killed in Sakhanka on 4 March and two elderly people injured in Kominternove on 22 March. Apartment buildings in the village of Hlybokyi suffered considerable damage, as did houses in other villages. After the truce had been announced, functioning schools in Zolote-5/Mykhailovka, Holmivskiyi and the Petrovsky district of Donetsk were subjected to shelling on 11, 20 and 21 March respectively. There has been trouble again near the Donetsk filtration station and the

Vasylivka pumping station. All this testifies to the need for the agreement as soon as possible in the TCG of additional measures for de-escalation and closer monitoring of the ceasefire regime. We trust that the parties will be able to reach an agreement on this before the Easter holidays.

The Ukrainian armed forces are provoking tension near the line of contact. The delivery of heavy weapons by rail and the rotation of equipment and personnel continue. The Ukrainian security forces are violating the ban on flights by aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and repeated launches have been recorded by the SMM. The security forces are demonstratively frustrating the implementation of the TCG Framework Decision on Disengagement of Forces and Hardware of 21 September 2016 in Stanytsia Luhanska, Petrivske and Zolote. According to the Mission's monitors, the situation has deteriorated noticeably in all three disengagement areas. The Ukrainian armed forces have strengthened their positions in Zolote (a number of armoured infantry fighting vehicles have been recorded there on several occasions) and in Petrivske. The ceasefire regime was repeatedly violated in Stanytsia Luhanska last month (15, 18, 21 and 22 March). Ukraine's sabotage of its disengagement commitments is having a negative impact on the security situation along the entire line of contact. We reiterate our call to the TCG to set a date for the start of this process in Stanytsia Luhanska and for the restoration of the status quo in Petrivske and Zolote, where such disengagement had taken place earlier.

The provocative attempts by Ukraine at the end of March to unilaterally open a crossing point in Zolote and supposedly to begin repairing the bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska are doing nothing to stabilize the situation. As you know, notably from the SMM's reports, the territory near Zolote needs to be demined first, otherwise the risk for the civilian population crossing there is simply too high. As for the bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska, I would just remind you that it was blown up in the same unilateral manner by the Ukrainian forces following a decision by the anti-terrorist operation headquarters in January 2015, which was immediately and publicly admitted by the then deputy head of the Main Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine in the Donetsk region, Illia Kyva (incidentally, he was a candidate in the presidential election, winning 0.03 per cent of the votes). Afterwards the Ukrainian representatives repeatedly blocked the adoption in the TCG of a decision to start repair work on the bridge, also dismissing the project by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Ukraine should now refrain from theatrical grandstanding and resume dialogue with the representatives of Donbas on these issues in the relevant TCG working groups in order to find viable solutions.

The SMM has recorded the laying of new minefields in violation of the Minsk agreements and the TCG Decision on Mine Action of 3 March 2016. With cases of mines being laid by the Ukrainian security forces in large numbers (for example, 900 TM-62 mines near Novoselivka in the Donetsk region), whole areas controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces remain closed to the SMM monitors under the pretext of the danger posed by mines. None of this is conducive to the SMM's effective monitoring and verification of the withdrawal of weapons. At the same time, omitting such restrictions on the SMM's monitoring distorts the real statistics regarding the obstruction of the Mission's work. We urge that they stop dividing the obstacles into "active" and "passive". We support the Mission's monitors, who are working under difficult conditions. Attempts to restrict their freedom of movement and obstruct the work of the SMM's technical monitoring equipment are inadmissible.

Mr. Chairperson,

Ukraine's actions run the risk of exacerbating the humanitarian situation in the region. The disgraceful situation regarding the non-payment of pensions continues. Elderly people have admitted to the SMM that they have stopped making the extremely dangerous journeys across the line of contact to receive them. In addition to the Ukrainian Government's socio-economic blockade of Donbas, the threat of a "water blockade" is becoming increasingly real. We have taken note of the reports by local authorities in

Dokuchaievsk about the Ukrainian authorities temporarily turning off the electricity supply to the water supply facilities located there. On 2 April, the Siverskyi Donets–Donbas canal was closed, as a result of which Olenivka and Dokuchaievsk were at risk of being completely without water for their populations. Ukraine must be urged to refrain from such radical measures, whatever the reasons for them. All contentious issues should be resolved by the parties at the meetings of the relevant TCG working groups in Minsk.

Fresh impetus needs to be given to the negotiations in the TCG on political questions. Despite the current uncertainty in Kyiv, Ukraine should fulfil its commitments, including those agreed upon in the “Normandy format”. Priority attention should be paid in the political group to the need to set out on paper the procedure for the entry into force of the law on the special status of Donbas under the “Steinmeier formula”. We urge the distinguished Ambassador Sajdik to continue efforts in that regard to facilitate direct dialogue between the representatives of the Ukrainian Government and of the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk, as stipulated by the Minsk Package of Measures. To judge by the results of the most recent meetings in Minsk, the Ukrainian Government continues to avoid substantive dialogue with the representatives of Donbas not only in the political working group, but also in all the other working groups.

The situation regarding human rights and fundamental freedoms in Ukraine remains extremely unsatisfactory, as recognized both by international non-governmental organizations and by the relevant United Nations institutions. Manifestations of aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism, the persecution of journalists, restrictions on freedom of speech and obstacles to an independent judiciary deserve attention from the SMM. It also needs to monitor the negative consequences of the entry into force of discriminatory legislative acts affecting the educational and linguistic rights of Russian-speaking Ukrainians and national minorities.

In violation of its commitments under international law, including its OSCE commitments, and also domestic legislation, the leadership of Ukraine continues to interfere in matters of Ukrainian Orthodoxy. The political motive behind these actions, which have nothing to do with questions of faith, is evident and is even openly recognized by the Ukrainian authorities themselves. According to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), by the end of March there had been 62 recorded cases of the seizure of its places of worship and parishes, sometimes with the active and unlawful participation of representatives of the local authorities. In the majority of cases, the law enforcement authorities remained indifferent and failed to make a legal assessment of these incidents. This being the case, we trust that the SMM will pay greater attention to the situation regarding the persecution of the UOC. I might add that this was mentioned by the representative of the UOC at the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on tolerance and non-discrimination held in Vienna on 1 and 2 April.

Mr. Chairperson,

In recent years, the Ukrainian Government has deliberately dragged out the settlement of the internal Ukrainian crisis. The Ukrainian leadership should stop thinking up endless pretexts for inaction and instead begin to responsibly fulfil its commitments under the Minsk agreements. With the current exacerbation of domestic political infighting in Ukraine, the risk of destabilization of the situation for opportunistic purposes is high. Under these conditions, a collective signal needs to be sent to the Ukrainian Government regarding the implementation as soon as possible of its commitments under the Minsk Package of Measures. Balanced monitoring by the SMM on both sides of the line of contact in Donbas, detailed recording of the destruction of civilian infrastructure facilities, attention to any reports of civilian casualties and summary information on the negative consequences of the Ukrainian Government’s measures to block vital activities in Donbas will all be of assistance in that regard. Closer attention also needs to be paid to the acute domestic political problems across the country.

In conclusion, we should like to thank the distinguished Ambassadors Sajdik and Apakan for their efforts to facilitate an internal Ukrainian settlement and for their detailed reports to the Permanent Council on the SMM's work. We trust that it will be possible to give an impetus to all constructive developments.

Thank you for your attention.