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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1131st (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

31 January 2017

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

Esteemed colleagues,

We are disturbed at the situation in Donbas, which has worsened dramatically.

The statements that we have heard from the delegations of Ukraine and the United States of America are a gross misrepresentation of the real state of affairs. The data from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) leaves no doubt as to who was behind the clashes. Everything is explained in the Mission report of 30 January.

On the night of 27 to 28 January, an SMM camera at the Oktiabr mine recorded one projectile in flight from north-west to south-east (in other words, the firing came from Ukrainian armed forces' positions), followed by an intensive exchange of fire. A camera in Avdiivka captured an exchange of artillery fire on video, which began with five projectiles in flight from north to south (also from Ukrainian armed forces' positions).

On the night of 28 to 29 January, fighting lasting several hours in the Avdiivka industrial zone was preceded by 15 projectiles in flight from north-west to south-east recorded by the SMM camera, again from Ukrainian armed forces' positions.

On 30 January, Ukrainian security forces carried out a sustained all-out attack and seized additional territory near Avdiivka.

According to SMM data, the Ukrainian armed forces were responsible for the escalation on the southern flank as well. In the early hours of 28 January, a camera in Shyrokyne recorded 20 projectiles in flight from west to east (once again from Ukrainian security force positions), after which fighting ensued.

The SMM statistics show that in the majority of cases when the monitors have managed to record the direction of fire, it has been established that the Ukrainian security

forces were responsible for the tank and artillery fire (200 violations were attributable to the Ukrainian armed forces and 80 to the militia).

The Ukrainian Government's actions pose an increasing threat to the lives of the inhabitants of Donbas and even to the soldiers of the Ukrainian army. Four civilians have been killed, seven injured, and 25 houses, a kindergarten and a school destroyed in Donetsk and Makiivka alone. According to the SMM, civilians have been injured in Brianka, and more than a dozen houses destroyed in Brianka, Donetsk, Olenivka, Zaichenko, Kalynove, Novooleksandrivka and Pervomaisk. There have been 2,300 violations of the ceasefire regime recorded in the area around Avdiivka, Yasynuvata and Donetsk airport alone.

Between 27 and 30 January, the Ukrainian Government carried out the latest in a series of attacks on militia positions near Mariupol and then near Donetsk for the purpose of seizing additional territory. It is the same as what happened near Svitlodarsk in December 2016. The Ukrainian armed forces are mounting an offensive and the Permanent Representative of Ukraine demands that a special meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council be convened as a diplomatic smokescreen. Who are you trying to deceive?

We urge the Ukrainian Government to stop holding the residents of Donbas hostage to a policy of permanent tension. It is inadmissible and immoral to use the people's suffering, which has been brought about by the actions of the Ukrainian army, as a means of drawing the international community's attention to Ukraine and simultaneously diverting the population's attention from the extremely unstable situation in the country.

As we can see, the Ukrainian Government's strategy of gradually seizing, metre by metre, the so-called grey zone along the line of contact and forward positions belonging to the Donetsk militia is being implemented in a systematic manner. This is fully in line with the statements made by the Ukrainian Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr. Arsen Avakov, who called for preparations to be made to seize the border in 2017. It is also in line with the position of the President of Ukraine, Mr. Petro Poroshenko, who on 22 January 2017 declared his unwillingness to implement the political points of the Minsk agreements until a truce had been established, in other words until he himself gave the order for the shooting to stop. Lastly, this is also confirmed by the recent talks in the Trilateral Contact Group, where the Ukrainian Government does nothing to conceal its goal of reaching at least the line of 19 September 2014 and, if possible, of seizing settlements beyond this line, as has already happened in Shyrokyne and Marinka.

We have heard nothing in the statements by representatives of the European Union countries about the inadmissibility of seizing additional territory – perhaps this kind of seizure is in your interests, ladies and gentlemen?

There has been a flagrant violation by Ukraine of its commitments under the Minsk agreements. The Ukrainian Government is endeavouring to resolve the conflict by force. We remember only too well how similar ventures have ended in the past.

We once again call on the Ukrainian authorities to put a complete stop to the hostilities, the attempts to seize additional territory and the shelling of Donetsk militia positions and urban areas. If the Ukrainian Government is truly concerned about the needs of the local population, it is essential first and foremost to lift the blockade of the region and resume work in the Working Group on Economic Issues in Minsk.

As for the Avdiivka coke plant and the Donetsk filter station, these issues have been discussed in the Contact Group.

Ukraine makes reference, in particular in the statement by its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to the destruction of property not justified by military necessity. It is gratifying that the Ukrainian Government has at least remembered this today. It is a pity that it forgot about it during the bombardment of the towns in Donbas in the spring and summer of 2014 and during the massive shelling of winter 2014 and 2015. Violations of international humanitarian law and other crimes by Ukrainian security forces have been recorded and criminal proceedings have been instituted. We trust that those truly responsible for the crimes committed by the Ukrainian regime and the radical nationalist groups in Donbas and other parts of the country, including Kyiv and Odessa, will be brought to justice.

In conclusion, we would once again remind you that the Minsk agreements, however inconvenient they might be for the Ukrainian leadership in Kyiv, remain the only framework for a peaceful settlement. Furthermore, they are the support underpinning the territorial integrity of Ukraine, which the Ukrainian authorities are increasingly eroding through their dangerous actions.

We trust that Ukraine's partners will exert due influence on the Ukrainian Government so as to force it to abandon its attempts to exact military revenge in Donbas and give up the Minsk agreements for lost.

Thank you for your attention.