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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1198th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

18 October 2018

**In response to the report by
György Varga, Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at the
Russian checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk**

Ambassador Varga,

We thank you for your detailed report. It is important that, in carrying out your work, you clearly follow your mandate and prepare depoliticized, fact-based reports that reflect the real situation at the two Russian checkpoints on the border with Ukraine.

The observers have recorded that the situation at the two border checkpoints is calm, with no movement of weapons and military equipment, regular cross-border traffic, border crossings for families of Ukrainian refugees with a large amount of luggage, and short-term entries into the territory of Russia for Ukrainian citizens to buy food and medicine and use banking services. This is evidence of the plight of Donbas, brought to the brink of survival by the Ukrainian Government's blockade, access control regime and termination of payments of pensions and social benefits. Russia does not remain indifferent to the fate of the residents of Donbas – we regularly send convoys with humanitarian aid there. For the purpose of transparency, we notify the Observer Mission and the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine of their contents in advance. As an unprecedented measure, we provide an opportunity for Ukrainian customs officers and border guards stationed on our territory to participate in the inspections of convoys.

Russia is closely following the situation around the team of observers, deployed as a gesture of goodwill at the invitation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in the wake of the Berlin Declaration of 2 July 2014 by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Russia, Germany, France and Ukraine. We recall that the subject of the matter is sensitive sites on the State border with a country where there is a continuing internal conflict. Extension of the observers' mandate is not an automatic process. We regularly evaluate not only the work of the observers, but also discussions in the OSCE concerning this issue.

A meeting on opportunities for enhancing transparency on the Russian-Ukrainian border, organized on 17 October by the Chairmanship, demonstrated that the goodwill shown

by Russia is still not being appreciated. The Governments of Ukraine and the United States of America are still choosing to selectively read and distort the Minsk agreements.

Let me remind you that Russia is under no obligation to deploy observers along the Russian-Ukrainian border, which is reliably guarded by the Border Service of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation. Point 9 of the Minsk Package of Measures deals with the reinstatement of full control of the State border by the Government of Ukraine upon the completion of a comprehensive political settlement, including the holding of local elections and constitutional reform. Attempts to misrepresent this document are unacceptable.

Ambassador Varga,

Russia is mindful of your appeals concerning the presence of observers at the Russian checkpoints. Taking into account the co-ordinating role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in matters of foreign policy relations, our Representative Office in Rostov-on-Don is ready to respond promptly to your inquiries. Russia is responsible for the security of the observers during their time at the checkpoint, which has a special regime affecting the movement around the perimeter during the passage of vehicles and people. In order to prepare the documents required for their work on time, we have agreed in advance on the current extension of the observers' mandate. We reiterate our position on the need for the observers to be accredited at the diplomatic missions of seconding States in Moscow. In the absence of an international legal personality of the OSCE, this is the only way to provide the Mission's staff with the necessary privileges and immunities. We welcome the decision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, which allowed your accreditation with the rank of ambassador. We encourage other participating States to follow this example.

In conclusion, allow me to thank you and all your colleagues for the work carried out and to express the hope that the further activities of the observers will not be held hostage by the politicized approaches of our partners.

Thank you for your attention.