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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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1309th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

15 April 2021

**On the deteriorating situation in Ukraine and the continued non-implementation of the
Minsk agreements by the Ukrainian authorities**

Madam Chairperson,

The Ukrainian Government's protracted and demonstrative non-implementation of the Minsk agreements and the decisions of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) and the Normandy format is having a negative impact on the prospects for a settlement of the internal Ukrainian crisis and is leading to further destabilization of the situation along the line of contact in Donbas and to a worsening of the situation in the country as a whole.

Supported by their external "minders" and political sponsors, the Ukrainian authorities are shirking from direct dialogue with the representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions as provided for by the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015. It is precisely on the basis of the latter that the negotiation process must proceed and decisions be worked out on political, security, socio-economic and humanitarian matters. Instead, contrary to the stipulations of United Nations Security Council resolution 2202, which endorsed the Package of Measures, the Ukrainian Government, together with its foreign patrons, is indulging in attempts to widen the geographical scope of the conflict – that is, to present, without providing any proof, what is going on as an allegedly bilateral confrontation between Ukraine and Russia. It is this logic that is dictating the actions of the Ukrainian representatives at the OSCE too.

The situation is being exacerbated by the ongoing military preparations of the Ukrainian armed forces in Donbas. Under the guise of pacifist rhetoric, the Ukrainian Government is in fact building up its military capacity near the line of contact. The Ukrainian armed forces are rotating and delivering new weapons and personnel; they are rehearsing military scenarios involving local operations. Against this backdrop, the country's authorities have, among other things, passed legislation to simplify the procedure for mobilizing reservists and intensified military-technical co-operation with foreign States.

It is not surprising that in these circumstances the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) is reporting an increase in ceasefire violations and fresh casualties and destruction. Analysis of SMM data indicates that over the past two weeks the number of exchanges of fire has increased threefold relative to the preceding two-week period. The Mission has confirmed the deaths of a number of civilians in

the courtyards of their houses in certain areas of the Donetsk region. On 22 March, a 71-year-old pensioner was killed by a single shot – that is, by aimed fire – on the western outskirts of the settlement of Oleksandrivka. He was the third fatal casualty since the beginning of the year in that settlement, which is constantly shelled by the Ukrainian military. On 2 April, a five-year-old child was fatally injured by an explosion in Oleksandrivske. The payload was presumably dropped by means of an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) that had flown in from territory controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces. According to fresh information, still to be confirmed by the SMM, a resident of the northern outskirts of Donetsk was killed there yesterday when the city was shelled.

Neither the Ukrainian authorities nor their external backers felt it necessary to at least express their sympathy over the deaths of an old man and a child. On the other hand, they publicly mourned the recent combat losses among the Ukrainian military personnel deployed for the shelling of populated areas in Donbas. Moreover, the US military attaché Brittany Stewart even came to the area of combat operations on 9 April as part of a delegation from the US Embassy in order to encourage her Ukrainian colleagues. She arrived wearing the insignia of the 72nd Mechanized Brigade that features the Nazi-style inscription “Ukraine or Death” and subsequently paid tribute to a member of the Right Sector nationalist battalion killed in Donbas, namely Vasyl Slipak.

The Ukrainian Government’s ongoing military preparations are accompanied by non-compliance in practice with the measures to strengthen the ceasefire regime that were agreed on with the representatives of Donbas on 22 July 2020. No order commanding the Ukrainian armed forces to implement all these measures was ever issued, even though the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk issued corresponding orders immediately after the measures were signed. Instead, the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine published some material in which the content and purport of the measures were distorted. It was not until slightly over eight months later that Ukraine’s representatives acknowledged these discrepancies and, on 7 April this year, the material on the Ministry of Defence website was replaced with the full published text of the measures – though, again, without the aforementioned order. Does such an order actually exist?

As shown by the way in which recent TCG meetings have played out, the Ukrainian Government is deliberately shirking from a discussion of practical mechanisms to ensure that the agreed measures of 22 July 2020 are implemented. This concerns in particular the creation and deployment of a co-ordination mechanism for responding to violations in the form provided for by the measures to strengthen the ceasefire.

Discussions on all the other aspects of the settlement process are also at a dead end. The representatives of Ukraine are effectively engaging in a mere simulacrum of negotiations. Nor is progress made any easier by the attempts to discredit the Minsk-based negotiation format undertaken by the head of the Ukrainian delegation to the TCG, Leonid Kravchuk, and his deputy Oleksii Reznikov, who is also Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Reintegration. They have both spoken out against any subsequent face-to-face meetings in Minsk.

In these circumstances, the Ukrainian military and security forces are continuing their tactic of ramping up tensions in Donbas. Just take, for example, the so-called anti-terrorism exercises that took place on the very line of contact in the settlement of Shchastia (Luhansk region) on 30 and 31 March. One might also recall the remarks made in February by the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Ruslan Khomchak, to the effect that all combat units are being actively trained “for offensive operations in urban areas”. Or his admission in an interview on 30 March that the Ukrainian military, assisted by their foreign partners, were preparing for an offensive in precisely such an area.

Moreover, there is no clear boundary between certain NATO States’ imaginary “show of resolve” in supporting the Ukrainian military on the one hand, and deliberately urging the latter on to use armed force

against the civilian population on the other. Of great concern are the increased manoeuvres by NATO units near Ukraine, the activities carried out by various kinds of instructors and advisers inside Ukrainian territory and the shipments of equipment and arms to Ukraine, including supplies of highly sophisticated and destructive lethal weapons. According to the available information, no fewer than five US military transport aircraft have arrived in Ukraine over the past few days. While fanning the belligerent aspirations of the hotheads in Kyiv, the United States of America and NATO are doing nothing to urge the Ukrainian authorities to fulfil what was endorsed by the United Nations Security Council in its resolution 2202. They consequently bear direct responsibility for the deterioration of the situation and all further violence.

The mighty arsenal of disinformation has been deployed as well in order to justify the flooding of Ukraine with military supplies. For example, in a news report on 12 April, the US television channel CNN tried to present Ukrainian military equipment being transported by train as Russian equipment. This is most telling.

Since the beginning of March, the SMM has recorded the movement of over 300 units of equipment and weaponry, including large-calibre weapons, at railway stations near the line of contact. We realize that much of this was not even caught by the SMM monitors' cameras. For example, on 2 April at the station in Kostiantynivka (Donetsk region), situated around 25 kilometres from the line of contact, the Ukrainian military did not allow the monitors to examine the loading area. A powerful source of radio signal interference has been identified nearby: on 6 April, for the first time since the SMM began to use long-range UAVs, such a device was unable to take off from its base in the government-controlled settlement of Stepanivka (Donetsk region). On 7, 8, 9 and 10 April, there was also a high level of interference aimed at disrupting the operations of UAVs in that area, making it necessary to adjust the flight paths or even to cancel some flights altogether. On 8 April, a UAV was forced by jamming to make an emergency landing a few kilometres from the station at Kostiantynivka. In its spot report of 7 April, the SMM confirmed that safe operation of UAVs in that area was impaired by "jamming at ground level". What is the Ukrainian military hiding? We urge the SMM to intensify its monitoring of the Ukrainian armed forces' rear positions: such monitoring is highly necessary for early warning of a potential escalation.

In this context we may observe how the Ukrainian Government is engaging in propaganda theatre as it seeks to divert the international community's attention from the events in Donbas to what is happening in neighbouring States, thereby shifting the focus away from its sabotage of the Minsk agreements. Another objective is evidently being pursued at the same time, namely to distract Ukrainians themselves from the problems within their country, which are linked to socio-economic and domestic political challenges.

We call on the Ukrainian authorities and their external "minders" to halt the spiral of civil war in the east of the country. It is necessary to leave behind the tactic of dragging negotiations out and making various kinds of threats about "offensive operations in urban areas", and to move on instead, on the basis of the Minsk Package of Measures, to substantive and meaningful direct dialogue with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk on the conditions for future peaceful coexistence.

Thank you for your attention.