

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/1079/21
8 July 2021

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. VLADIMIR ZHEGLOV,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1323rd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 July 2021

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

Madam Chairperson,

We welcome the distinguished Ambassadors Heidi Grau and Yaşar Halit Çevik. We listened with interest to the reports presented. These confirm that the momentum of the negotiation process to settle the crisis in Ukraine continues to be disappointing, and that the situation on the ground remains fraught with the potential for escalation. The fruitless meetings of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) and its working groups on 6 and 7 July are also very revealing on that score.

The root of the problem lies in the Ukrainian Government's reluctance to implement the Minsk agreements, which remain the sole framework for a settlement of the crisis in Ukraine. I would remind you that the Package of Measures of 12 February 2015 was endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202, thereby becoming part of international law and subject to strict implementation.

The Ukrainian authorities are ducking out of a key condition of the settlement, namely direct dialogue between the representatives of the conflict parties – that is, the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk. The delegation of Ukraine to the TCG has still not reacted to the action plan for implementing the Minsk agreements that was submitted by the representatives of Donetsk as far back as October last year. The “Joint Action Plan” of its own that the Ukrainian Government subsequently put forward at the TCG runs counter, in most of its provisions, to the Minsk agreements and does not provide for contacts with the current representatives of Donbas. Moreover, the representatives of Ukraine continue to block the work of the relevant TCG working group, that is, the Political Working Group – all this in spite of the proposal by Special Representative Grau to fully resume formal meetings of the working group by restricting participation in these to official representatives solely. It would be interesting to hear the distinguished Ambassador Grau give her assessments of, and outlook on the prospects for, the political strand of the settlement process.

The ceasefire-strengthening measures of 22 July 2020, which were developed with the personal involvement of the distinguished Ambassadors Grau and Çevik, continue to be violated demonstrably. Two

serious incidents have occurred over the past month that could have a most negative impact on the fate of the ceasefire arrangements between the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donbas.

On 11 June, a sabotage and reconnaissance group of the Ukrainian armed forces attacked an observation post of the Luhansk militia near the settlement of Holubivske. Five people were killed on that occasion. On 21 June, four members of the Donetsk militia were killed and five were wounded near the settlements of Lozove and Staromykhailivka (in certain areas of the Donetsk region) as a result of an ambulance convoy coming under a mortar attack followed by shelling with a grenade launcher.

While carrying out armed provocations, Ukraine is at the same time thwarting the execution of a task stipulated by the measures of 22 July 2020, namely to launch a co-ordination mechanism for responding to ceasefire violations through the facilitation of the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination in its current setting – that is, with the participation of representatives of the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk. The effective operation of such a mechanism would make it possible not only to ensure that the ceasefire is maintained, but also to step up work on other security-related aspects.

From the latest reports by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) we can see that there has been an intensification in shipments of heavy weapons belonging to the Ukrainian forces via the Rubizhne railway station in the Luhansk region. This is accompanied by a display of militaristic bravado as recently performed on Ukrainian television by the information policy adviser to Ukraine's TCG delegation, Oleksiy Arestovych, who spoke of being ready to "encircle the major cities and swiftly bring out the artillery towards the border". It appears that the Ukrainian staff headquarters are brimming with enthusiasm over the increasingly frequent joint military exercises conducted together with a number of NATO countries, during which it is hardly likely that peaceful scenarios for implementation of the Minsk agreements are being worked through. By the way, according to official statements, these exercises are meant to have an impact on the security situation nationwide, which is being monitored by the SMM in keeping with its mandate. We call on the Mission to ensure that information on such exercises is reflected in its reports. We should like to obtain clarification from Mr. Çevik as to why this has not been done so far. We urge the SMM also to ramp up its monitoring of the Ukrainian armed forces' rear positions, as such monitoring is most necessary with a view to providing early warning of a potential escalation.

The regular shelling of towns in Donbas continues, which is inflicting immeasurable suffering on the civilian population. Incidentally, Mr. Çevik mentioned the growing number of instances of shelling. It is important to mention also which side is responsible for them.

As for the other strands of the settlement process – the political, socio-economic and humanitarian strands – the situation is also one of standstill. The socio-economic blockade of Donbas continues. The Ukrainian Government is not just pushing this region out of the general Ukrainian legal and economic space, but is effectively pursuing a policy of strangling it. The obligations regarding the resumption of socio-economic ties (paragraph 8 of the Package of Measures) are not being fulfilled, including the obligation to pay pensions and welfare benefits, with no strings attached, to people living on the other side of the line of contact. Against this backdrop, cynical announcements are being made by the Ukrainian Government about the creation of centres providing administrative services in areas under its control along the line of contact. These centres evidently symbolize its unwillingness to set about truly restoring ties with Donbas through dialogue with the local authorities there.

We should like to hear an assessment from you, Ms. Grau, as to what can be done, in terms of the position of Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the TCG, to help end the blockade of Donbas fully and as soon as possible.

Ambassador Çevik,

We reiterate our categorical support for the efforts of the SMM staff, who are working under difficult conditions caused by shelling and the coronavirus pandemic. We are very concerned about the recent instances of the Mission's property suffering damage. On 29 June, a long-range unmanned aerial vehicle belonging to the SMM crashed near the rear positions of the Ukrainian armed forces as a result of jamming. On 2 July, damage was detected to a camera located at the Oktiabr mine (Donetsk region). Are you aware of who did these things?

That being said, it is important that the Mission should not focus exclusively on Donbas. Monitoring the security situation near the line of contact is undoubtedly a key task, but it is not the only one. Close attention needs to be paid to the situation in the rest of the country. Various aspects relating to respect for human rights should, in line with its mandate, remain within the SMM's focus, including those aspects that attract widespread public interest. It is necessary to report also on the consequences of the Ukrainian Government's discriminatory legislative acts in the area of language and education, which are at odds with the provisions of the country's Constitution and with Ukraine's OSCE commitments.

Significantly, the Mission's interpretation of its mandate should not be reduced to the principle "we just report on what we see" – it must support respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

It is important not to allow imbalances in the presentation of material. For example, the Mission's reports have incorporated information on threats made against the ethnic Hungarians of Zakarpattia and the criminal proceedings instituted by the law enforcement authorities in connection with these threats. Yet, they fail to refer to the Russophobic slogans and corresponding threats that are a regular fixture at the rallies of radical right-wing organizations. There is no information either on the actions – or inaction – of the police in that regard.

Manifestations of aggressive nationalism and radicalism accompanied by violence continue to have an impact on the security situation across Ukraine. It is unacceptable to assess the xenophobic demonstrations by radicals as being "patriotic". What is required is highly detailed information on the organizers of and participants in these events, together with a comprehensive, rather than selective, presentation of material on the slogans used by them. Particular attention must be paid to facts attesting to the Ukrainian authorities' deviation from OSCE principles as in, for example, the provision of police escorts for neo-Nazi marches, or the participation of the authorities and members of the armed forces in the funerals of Nazi accomplices, and so on. There is a need for the Mission to catalogue information on manifestations of aggressive nationalism, neo-Nazism and xenophobia in Ukraine in a dedicated thematic report, for which there would certainly be no lack of material.

It is important not to slacken off in monitoring the situation faced by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC). SMM observations confirm that the religious structure established by the previous leadership of Ukraine continues to exert pressure on the UOC – what is more, with the support of the current administration. We urge that the consequences of such discrimination be carefully monitored. Why have the Mission's reports not incorporated information on the demonstration by several thousands of UOC believers who came to Kyiv on 15 June from all over the country to demand from the authorities that their rights cease to be encroached upon?

The selective approach adopted by the Mission when considering the situation at the checkpoints on Ukraine's borders with other States is also puzzling. Its reports contain information on some of the checkpoints located in the south and east of the country, where the situation, as pointed out, is calm. At the

same time, there is no information on the state of affairs in other segments of the border – particularly in the light of reports from the law enforcement agencies of neighbouring States about how they are tackling attempts at arms trafficking. By the way, the problem posed by the uncontrolled circulation of weapons in Ukraine has already prompted the authorities of one neighbouring country to announce the closure of its State border with Ukraine.

Ambassadors Grau and Çevik,

The practice of previous years shows that, as far as the Minsk agreements are concerned, the Ukrainian Government has succeeded in achieving only one thing, namely to refine its virtuoso-like mastery of sabotaging its own commitments, which has driven the settlement process into a dead end. It would not be out of place to note that, more than six years after the signing of the Package of Measures, not a single one of its provisions has been fully implemented. The fact that there is an urgent need for progress is confirmed, among other things, by your reports today.

In closing, allow me to wish both of you success in your work and the best of health. We should like to express our gratitude individually to the distinguished Ambassador Grau, who intends to wrap up her work as Special Representative, for her efforts and personal contribution in support of settling the internal Ukrainian crisis.

We take this opportunity to congratulate the distinguished Ambassadors Sylvie-Agnès Bermann and Charlotta Relander on their appointment as Co-ordinators of, respectively, the Political Working Group and the Humanitarian Working Group of the TCG. We are counting on them to work effectively with the parties.

Thank you for your attention.