

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1215th (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 February 2019

**In response to the reports by the Special Representative of the OSCE  
Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group,  
Ambassador Martin Sajdik, and the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special  
Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan**

Ambassadors Sajdik and Apakan,

We are grateful for the reports presented. Both of you have been working to help resolve the internal Ukrainian crisis for quite a long time now: Mr. Martin Sajdik for more than three and a half years, and Mr. Ertuğrul Apakan for almost five years. Despite your efforts, the crisis in Ukraine is still far from being resolved. The main reasons for this are the Ukrainian Government's failure to implement the agreements reached, its reliance on a scenario involving the use of force and unwillingness to engage in direct dialogue with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk.

Support for the Minsk agreements is crucial, especially now when there are ever louder calls in the Ukrainian Government for their revision or complete removal. This month will mark the fourth anniversary of the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, endorsed by the United Nations Security Council. It is the only framework for an internal Ukrainian settlement, and can and should be fully implemented by the parties. However, the Ukrainian Government is blatantly sabotaging most of its provisions, beginning with the first point.

The 14th truce agreed in the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) in the run-up to the New Year's holidays is not being fully observed. Daily skirmishes are being recorded once again (more than 18,000 since 29 December), and tension is growing. The Ukrainian Government not only fails to issue orders to some of its military personnel about the need to observe the truce, but also fails to take disciplinary measures for violations of it.

Military equipment belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces continues to be moved closer to the line of contact. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) noted the arrival of large-calibre artillery and tanks by rail (131 units of weaponry were identified over the past two weeks) at the stations in Kostiantynivka, Bakhmut (Artemivsk) and

Zachativka in the Donetsk region, and also in Rubizhne in the Luhansk region. As can be seen from the Mission's reports, the Ukrainian armed forces have prevented monitoring near Kostiantynivka, through which the bulk of the military cargo passed. SMM unmanned aerial vehicles have been repeatedly jammed there, and the monitors have been denied access to the unloading platform at the station. Between 16 and 30 January, 124 units of heavy weaponry belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces were recorded in violation of the withdrawal lines.

The Ukrainian security forces are disrupting the implementation of the Framework Decision of 21 September 2016 on Disengagement of Forces and Hardware. They stubbornly refuse to begin disengagement in Stanytsia Luhanska, where, according to the SMM, the necessary conditions have been in place since December of last year. They are provoking skirmishes in Petrivske. They are violating the silence regime and strengthening their positions in Zolote, where new trenches and equipment belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces have been discovered. We urge the Trilateral Contact Group to agree on a final date for disengagement in Stanytsia Luhanska and decide on a time-frame for restoring the status quo in Petrivske and Zolote, where disengagement had taken place earlier. This will make it possible to begin agreeing on new disengagement areas at the line of contact in accordance with the instructions issued by the Normandy Quartet leaders in Berlin on 19 October 2016.

The Ukrainian Government's activities are resulting in a deterioration in the humanitarian situation near the line of contact. In recent weeks, there have been reports of the destruction of civilian infrastructure facilities, including hospitals, kindergartens and schools. The Vasylivka pumping station has come under fire repeatedly. Incidentally, we have taken note that there was no mention in the SMM reports of the fact that shots were fired at that pumping station (23 and 29 January) and at cars parked near it (17 January). We urge the Mission to respond promptly to reports of violations of the ceasefire regime near critical infrastructure facilities. The agreement in the Trilateral Contact Group of additional measures for de-escalation, including the provision of security guarantees during repairs and maintenance work, is of particular relevance. We also need a thematic report by the SMM on casualties and destruction.

In accordance with its mandate, the SMM should monitor the situation not only in Donbas but also in the rest of Ukraine. With regard to Donbas, the monitoring should be carried out equally on both sides of the line of contact. We condemn any threats to the Mission's monitors. Attempts to restrict their freedom of movement and attacks on SMM monitoring equipment are inadmissible.

We have taken note of the plan mentioned in the media of involving the UN in the settlement of the crisis, as proposed by the distinguished Ambassador Sajdik. This plan contravenes the spirit and the letter of the Minsk agreements, the essence of which is the close link between security and politics. Most importantly, it completely ignores the role of the republics and the need for dialogue with them, without which a settlement is impossible.

We recall that in September 2017 Russia distributed its draft resolution in the United Nations Security Council on the establishment of a UN mission to protect the OSCE SMM, in order to help ensure a safe working environment for the Mission. It does not replace the Minsk agreements, the role of the Normandy format, the OSCE Mission or the Trilateral Contact Group. We call for substantive work on this draft, which provides a real framework for compromise.

There is no progress in the political sphere owing to the unconstructive policy of the Ukrainian authorities. The Ukrainian Government continues to call into question the cornerstone of the entire political settlement process – the granting of special status to Donbas. The legislative framework for this has still not been made permanent, as stipulated in Point 11 of the Minsk Package of Measures. The Ukrainian side refuses to set out on paper the procedure for its entry into force under the Steinmeier formula. Furthermore, on 22 January, Mr. Petro Poroshenko publicly announced that there would be no special status for individual regions in Ukraine. It would appear that, in the run-up to the presidential election, the Ukrainian Government is not willing to take any steps on the political track. It is not surprising that at the meeting of the TCG Working Group on Political Issues on 30 January the Ukrainian Government's representatives once again refused to discuss political questions.

The inhumane economic, transport and energy blockade of Donbas continues. The Ukrainian Government is not just “squeezing” this region out of the common legal and economic space in Ukraine, but has actually embarked on a policy of suffocating it. All of this, coupled with the regular shelling of towns in Donbas, results in massive suffering on the part of the civilian population. The Ukrainian Government is failing to fulfil its obligations regarding the re-establishment of socio-economic ties and the payment of pensions and social benefits (Point 8 of the Package of Measures). Ukraine is ignoring the September 2018 decision of its own Supreme Court to remove the barriers to such payments. The situation is not improving. Pensioners are forced to shuttle back and forth across the line of contact to obtain welfare benefits, spending hours in queues. This has cost some of them their lives.

The activities of the Ukrainian authorities are only deepening the divide in society. Discriminatory legislative initiatives contravening the Ukrainian Government's commitments under international law and domestic legislation, as well as the Minsk Package of Measures, are being put forward. The recommendations by the Venice Commission on the introduction of amendments to the Law on Education have not been heeded. The Verkhovna Rada is examining a draft law on the State language, which deprives Donbas of the right to linguistic self-determination (stipulated in Point 11 of the Package of Measures). Radical nationalism is being encouraged. For the first time last month, the birthday of Stepan Bandera was celebrated across the country as a public holiday. We urge the SMM to provide an objective assessment of these facts. It is quite unacceptable in our view for the Mission to refer to torchlit processions with neo-Nazi slogans as “peaceful gatherings” in its report. A thematic report by the SMM on the manifestations of aggressive nationalism, neo-Nazism and xenophobia in Ukraine is long overdue. We do not understand why the Mission is taking so long to prepare this report.

An alarming situation has emerged in the religious sphere. The changes to the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations are at odds with Ukraine's human rights commitments, provoking violence against priests and parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In view of the campaign launched by the Ukrainian leadership to take over churches, parishes and property of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, this area needs to be monitored more closely. We expect objective assessments from the SMM.

The situation with regard to freedom of the media requires constant attention from the OSCE. The head of the RIA Novosti Ukraine news portal, Kirill Vyshinsky, remains behind bars, as do many other journalists who have displeased the Ukrainian Government. There is no progress in the investigation of high-profile murders of journalists.

Against this background, it is not surprising that only a little more than 2 per cent of the Ukrainian population believe that the country is moving in the right direction. These are figures from independent opinion polls conducted in December by the Seetarget agency. Over 43 per cent of the respondents strongly believed that Ukraine's current course is wrong.

Mr. Chairperson,  
Ambassadors Sajdik and Apakan,

The practice of previous years shows that the Ukrainian leadership is quite capable of embarking on new military adventures in Donbas to resolve its political problems of the moment. Under these circumstances, the restraining effect of the presence and activities of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and its opportunities for providing early warning of military escalation are extremely important. At the same time, security cannot be guaranteed in the settlement of the Ukrainian crisis without progress on the political track and vice versa. We call on the Ukrainian Government to engage in serious discussions with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk in the Trilateral Contact Group. We need to ensure that the provisions of the Minsk Package of Measures are implemented quickly and in a full and co-ordinated manner.

Thank you for your attention.