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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1335th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

16 September 2021

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

Mr. Chairperson,

No progress has been made in the settlement of the crisis in Ukraine; the situation continues to deteriorate. Once again, the Ukrainian Government exploited the meetings of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) and its working groups on 14 and 15 September to avoid addressing pressing issues related to the settlement process.

Instead of substantive work, the representatives of Ukraine persistently seek to steer the discussions towards consideration of the long-settled matter as to who should be regarded as parties to the conflict. In this, incidentally, they are often encouraged by their foreign “handlers”, who refer to a certain “constructive vagueness” in the text of the Minsk agreements. However, it is important to understand that that discussion was closed back in 2015 with the signing of the Minsk Package of Measures and its endorsement by the United Nations Security Council in resolution 2202 of 17 February 2015. The provisions of the Package of Measures unequivocally point to the parties who are responsible for their implementation. They are the Ukrainian authorities and armed forces on the one hand, and the representatives of certain areas of Donbas and their armed formations on the other. In that same document, emphasis is placed on the need for contacts between them on all aspects related to the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

For a long time, it has been the case that the stance of Ukraine towards the Minsk agreements as such may be described as reflecting a “split personality”. On the one hand, during foreign policy interactions – notably within the Normandy format and at international organizations, including the OSCE – the representatives of the Ukrainian Government assert their determination to implement the Minsk agreements in good faith. On the other hand, they pontificate in public, through Ukrainian and foreign media, about how these agreements are “a noose around the neck of Ukraine” (Leonid Kravchuk), how they are “not legally binding” and “susceptible of different interpretations” (Oleksii Reznikov) and how the Minsk process itself is allegedly “historically dead” and “needs to be reformatted” (Mr. Reznikov again). Even more bizarre statements have been made. On 3 September, Oleksii Arestovych, the spokesperson of the Ukrainian delegation to the TCG, announced on Ukrainian television that “as far as the Minsk agreements are concerned, Ukraine has got itself off the hook.”

It is not surprising that, given such attitudes, the meetings of the TCG and its working groups this week once again concluded without any results. There are still no regulations for the TCG's work, nor has there been any headway in drawing up a "road map" for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Using procedural pretexts, the representatives of Ukraine are blocking the work of the Humanitarian Working Group – following the same pattern as when they previously obstructed the resumption of formal meetings of the Political Working Group. They categorically refuse to return to face-to-face work in Minsk. The attitude of the current authorities in Ukraine, which are ducking out of substantive dialogue with the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk, has brought the settlement process to a standstill.

Against this backdrop, the security situation along the line of contact in Donbas continues to worsen. The numbers of instances of shelling and civilian casualties have increased significantly in the past few weeks, as confirmed by the Deputy Chief Monitors of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), Mark Etherington and Antje Grawe, during the briefing they gave at the OSCE on 10 September. The Ukrainian armed forces have intensified considerably their combat activities in the direction of certain areas of Donbas. In violation of obligations under international law, they are laying and using anti-personnel mines, as confirmed by the SMM's observations. For example, an MON-90 mine was spotted near a checkpoint of the Ukrainian armed forces in the vicinity of the settlement of Popasna in the Luhansk region (daily reports dated 6 and 9 September; weekly report dated 14 September). The SMM monitors' cameras are capturing a growing number of pieces of heavy equipment and weaponry being transported by rail near the line of contact. A range of data on the destruction caused by the shelling await analysis by the Mission, which in accordance with its mandate is obliged not only to establish facts but also to report them.

We are concerned about the information on damage to infrastructure facilities in certain areas of Donbas. During an attack on 8 September, critical systems in the operating Zasyadko coal mine in the city of Donetsk were disabled. On 11 September, an explosion in the Kirovskyi district of Donetsk damaged a fuel tank at an oil terminal; fragments of an unmanned aerial vehicle were discovered near the tank.

Instead of the road to peace, the authorities in Kyiv have chosen the path of transforming the country into a "flexible military State". The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dmytro Kuleba, spoke about this a few days ago in an interview with *The Independent*. The Ukrainian authorities are also being urged on by foreign emissaries in their striving to arm the country to the detriment of nationwide dialogue. For example, a delegation of members of the United States Congress was in Kyiv on 6 September. During their meetings with the Ukrainian leadership, they once again promised to expedite the transfer of the next consignment of lethal weapons. We demand of our partners, including those who claim to be facilitating the settlement of the crisis in Ukraine, to stop their destructive actions aimed at militarizing Ukraine.

Nor are the military exercises being conducted on the territory of Ukraine with the involvement of armed formations and foreign military equipment from NATO countries conducive to nationwide peace and harmony. The following manoeuvres are due to take place soon: "Joint Endeavor 2021" (from 22 to 30 September) and "Rapid Trident 2021" (from 20 September to 1 October). None of this, we repeat, is in line with the provisions of paragraph 10 of the Package of Measures, which stipulates the withdrawal of all foreign armed formations and military equipment from the territory of Ukraine under monitoring by the OSCE. We expect the SMM to incorporate, in accordance with its mandate, data on these exercises into its reports.

The goals pursued in militarizing Ukraine are quite obvious, namely to maintain a "hotspot" of controlled tension near the borders of Russia and to "clear" the eastern space in preparation for its subsequent geopolitical absorption. Persistent attempts are being made to foist on the Ukrainian people an artificial choice between Russia and the so-called collective West, which amounts to a flawed zero-sum game. Moreover, progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration – incidentally, no one thought to ask the

Ukrainian people for their views on that – is being closely linked to the level of Russophobia in the country. Not surprisingly, dealing in Russophobia has become one of the major foreign policy “exports” of the Ukrainian Government. This is connected with a surge of radical nationalism and neo-Nazism to which its external “handlers” are demonstrably shutting their eyes. No word of condemnation or even concern is to be heard from them.

On 12 September, the International Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Fascism was observed around the world. Shortly before that, the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, speaking at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., asserted that the influence of neo-Nazis in Ukraine today was “less than zero” and that the ideology of intolerance had “no chance” in the country.

However, the real situation suggests otherwise. Paramilitary organizations of a neo-Nazi bent feel quite at home in Ukraine. The glorification of Ukrainian nationalists who became accomplices of Hitler has been elevated to the rank of State policy: streets and community facilities are being named after them. Additionally, in violation of existing obligations under international law, a campaign has been unleashed in the country to destroy symbols commemorating victory over Nazism in the Second World War. I shall give a few recent examples.

In July, the authorities in Lviv completed the dismantling of the Monument to Military Glory, that is, of a monument honouring the Soviet soldiers of different nationalities who fell fighting to liberate Ukraine. But that was not enough for the municipal authorities: they then drew up official plans for destroying a memorial representing the Order of the Great Patriotic War situated at the Marsove Pole (Field of Mars). It recently became known that the authorities in the city of Drohobych, in the Lviv region, have set their sights on destroying the Eternal Flame memorial at the cenotaph for Soviet soldiers killed in combat during the liberation of western Ukraine in 1944.

This desecration of the symbols and monuments to a victory shared by all the peoples of the Soviet Union is being carried out in violation of Ukraine’s obligations under the Agreement on Perpetuating the Memory of the Courage and Heroism of the Peoples of the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945, to which Ukraine continues to be party.

The saying that those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it has never seemed more apposite.

Thank you for your attention.