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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1173rd MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

25 January 2018

**On the situation in Ukraine  
and the need to implement the Minsk agreements**

Mr. Chairperson,

Our position on the Ukrainian conflict remains unchanged – there needs to be full implementation of the Minsk agreements through direct dialogue between the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk. We are willing to facilitate this in any way.

Despite the “New Year ceasefire”, the Ukrainian Government is stepping up military activities at the line of contact in Donbas and provoking an escalation of the conflict. The security forces shelled a bus carrying 50 civilians near Olenivka on 21 January. One person was killed and another injured. In its report dated 22 January, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) confirms firing from Ukrainian armed forces’ positions. On 22 January, shots were fired at Dokuchaievsk from an infantry fighting vehicle and mortar. Five people were injured.

Between 15 and 21 January, the monitors discovered 26 units of Ukrainian armed forces’ equipment in violation of the Minsk agreements and 89 heavy weapons belonging to the security forces immediately behind the withdrawal lines.

Freshly dug trenches have been discovered leading from Ukrainian armed forces’ positions to a water pumping station in Vasylivka, which is a vital civilian infrastructure facility. The Ukrainian armed forces are provoking exchanges of fire near the Donetsk filtration station as well.

SMM monitors recorded 450 cases of Ukrainian armed forces’ artillery systems, mortars and tanks missing from their storage sites. We caution the authorities in Kyiv against any military adventures in an attempt to impose the authority of the Government over Donbas by force. We are counting on intensified monitoring by the SMM, which can have a restraining influence on the Ukrainian armed forces.

The draft law on the “reintegration of Donbas” adopted by the Verkhovna Rada is leading to an escalation of the situation. It strengthens through legal means the Ukrainian Government’s refusal to implement the Minsk agreements in addition to their *de facto* sabotage. This unilateral step by the Ukrainian Government will only result in a deepening of the conflict. All the questions regarding a settlement in Donbas within the framework of the Minsk Package of Measures must be resolved as agreed by the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk.

We should like to hear clarifications as to how this law is in line with the provisions of the Minsk agreements regarding an amnesty in connection with the events in Donbas, with the law on the special status of Donbas, and with the holding of local elections, the modalities of which should be agreed upon with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk.

The draft law gives the actions of the government forces in Donbas the status of a military operation. All the security agencies are subordinate to the military. The President has the right to establish an “operational headquarters”, which will be able to use the armed forces against the civilian population throughout the territory of the country without the introduction of martial law. The Ukrainian authorities disclaim responsibility for the consequences of their actions, resorting as a cover to the fictitious image of Russia as the enemy. The representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions who signed the Minsk agreements are referred to as the “occupying administration”.

In this way, the Ukrainian Government legalizes the resolution of the problems in Donbas through the use of force and the President of Ukraine is given the right to suppress dissent in the country with the army’s assistance. Furthermore, that document effectively justifies the supply of lethal weapons to Ukraine, by means of which the civilian population of Donbas will be killed.

In order to stabilize the situation, on the other hand, it is necessary to put a stop to the punitive operation – regardless of whether it is called an “anti-terrorist operation” or something else. The Ukrainian armed forces’ orders prohibiting the use of weapons must be made public. Nationalist armed formations should be withdrawn from the conflict zone and then disbanded. Heavy weapons should be withdrawn and put into storage. It is time finally to disengage the forces in the Stanytsia Luhanska area.

We recall that the issue of transferring control of the border to the Ukrainian Government will be resolved after a comprehensive political settlement, as stipulated in the Package of Measures. It is not possible to pretend that the political commitments under this document endorsed by a United Nations Security Council resolution do not exist.

We commend the order given by the leadership of certain areas of the Donetsk region on 6 January prohibiting the obstruction of the SMM monitors in their work. Last week, the monitors encountered a total of 22 restrictions on government-controlled territory and 12 restrictions outside that territory.

We urge the OSCE Mission leaders to step up their co-operation with the Donbas authorities. Use needs to be made of local opportunities for carrying out tasks previously dealt with by Russian officers in the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination.

The escalation in Donbas is directly linked to the political troubles in Ukraine. Nationalist hysteria is expressed in discriminatory laws on education and television and radio broadcasting, in the tightening of procedures for entering Ukrainian territory, in encouraging attacks on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and, most importantly, in stoking militaristic sentiments.

According to the SMM, during a rally in Kyiv on 16 January, members of the Donbas volunteer battalion and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists wearing flak jackets and carrying wooden sticks set tyres alight. On the same day, there was an attack on a Socialist Party office in Dnipro. The week before last, through their presence in the courtroom, radicals forced a court in Odessa to acquit the instigator of mass riots.

This is a powerful instrument for exerting pressure on the authorities. The nationalists reject the principle of the rule of law and dictate their conditions to the courts and local self-government bodies. They remain one of the main obstacles to achieving a peaceful settlement. We will judge the willingness of the Ukrainian Government to implement the Minsk agreements in good faith by the measures taken to suppress the radical nationalists.

In conclusion, we should like once again to warn the Ukrainian Government and those who support it against attempts at playing out a scenario involving the use of force. We must all work towards peace at the earliest opportunity in Ukraine.

Thank you for your attention.