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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1099th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

5 May 2016

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The latest truce was concluded on the occasion of Orthodox Easter in Ukraine. As the OSCE monitors have reported, not a single violation of the ceasefire regime was recorded in the Luhansk region during this time. There was a considerable reduction in the number of violations in the Donetsk region.

Unfortunately, the presence of radical elements and foreign mercenaries at the line of contact as well as problems with discipline among the ranks of the Ukrainian security forces meant it was impossible to establish a regime of complete silence in Donbas.

Nevertheless, the situation gives grounds for cautious optimism. We hope that the recent signals from our Western partners to the authorities in Kyiv are at last having the right effect. According to information available, the Ukrainian Government has, for example, decided to withdraw from the line of contact the 14th Detached Mechanized Brigade, subunits of which were involved in the recent shelling of Olenivka on 27 April 2016. This does not release the Brigade's command of responsibility for what happened, but will possibly serve to establish a calmer situation around Donetsk.

In this situation, there is a growing need for close and, what is especially important, "mirror" monitoring of the security zone by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM). All the resources that the Mission has in Donbas should be thrown at this problem. The SMM's restraining capacity is needed now more than ever in order to consolidate the positive trend and make the ceasefire permanent.

Incidents like the aforementioned shelling of Olenivka must not be repeated. It is clear that those who decided at the last Permanent Council meeting to remain silent about this incident or erroneously attributed it to "crossfire" had not managed to read carefully the corresponding SMM report, in which both the consequences of the shelling and the direction from which the firing came are made fairly clear.

For our part, we cannot but draw attention to the comments by several Western colleagues that “it is not important who shelled Olenivka”. Attempts to cleanse the authorities in Kyiv of guilt for the consequences of the punitive operation in Donbas are extremely dangerous.

Mr. Chairperson,

On 2 May it was two years since the barbaric arson attack by Ukrainian nationalists on dozens of civilians who were sheltering in the Trade Union Building in Odessa. All that these people were guilty of was having openly expressed their rejection of the anti-constitutional coup d'état that had occurred in Kyiv in February 2014.

According to the report by the Council of Europe International Advisory Panel on Ukraine of 4 November 2015, the investigation allegedly conducted by the Ukrainian authorities was absolutely not in keeping with the requirements of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms as well as the criteria of the independence, effectiveness and impartiality of the investigation within a reasonable time-frame.

The impunity of the persons guilty of the arson attack in Odessa remains a fact and, by all accounts, the Ukrainian authorities and a number of Western governments are acting as if this is normal. Or is it not important to our colleagues who burned the people in Odessa? We call on the competent OSCE institutions and the SMM to step up their efforts regarding the “Odessa case”.

We note that the SMM carefully monitored the alarming situation in Odessa during the May holidays. A visible SMM presence in such a situation is needed not only to monitor events in accordance with the Mission’s mandate, but also to restrain radical elements, which lose the freedom to act in the presence of the OSCE monitors.

We see the practical benefit of the SMM’s work in the humanitarian field. Daily information in the Mission’s reports about the lack of opportunity for civilians to cross the line of contact in the Luhansk region contributed to the opening of a Ukrainian checkpoint in Stanytsia Luhanska on 30 April. According to the SMM’s reports, approximately 3,500 people passed through this checkpoint in both directions during the first 24 hours alone. However, overall the situation regarding freedom of movement for the inhabitants of Donbas remains unsatisfactory. The SMM has reported that people queue up for up to two days at the Ukrainian checkpoint in Maiorsk. Angry people who had spent a day queuing in Marinka even hammered with their fists on an SMM vehicle out of frustration.

We thank the Mission for its assistance in demining activities. Only thanks to the vigilance of the monitors who drew the attention of the Ukrainian administration and the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination to the fact that anti-tank mines had been laid near a bus stop in Novotoshkivske did the Ukrainian armed forces decide to remove this serious threat to the civilian population after all.

We call on the Mission not to reduce its activity in monitoring military equipment in the “security zone” and to report on whether it is absent from the depots. According to the SMM, between 27 April and 3 May, in violation of the Minsk Package of Measures and

Addendum, nine howitzers, six tanks, three surface-to-air missile systems and three anti-tank guns belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces were recorded near the line of contact. During the same period, in the course of a visit to Ukrainian depots, the monitors discovered that 46 howitzers, 111 tanks, 21 anti-tank guns and 14 mortars were missing. Shell explosions continue to be reported from the Ukrainian training ground at the line of contact in Trokhizbenka (2 May).

We expect a constructive response from the SMM to our specific proposals for improving the effectiveness of the Mission's work, which we made known at the last Permanent Council meeting.

An opportune moment needs to be used to intensify the work of the Trilateral Contact Group and implement the political, economic and humanitarian aspects of the Minsk agreements.

We also trust that the ministerial meeting in the Normandy format, for which preparations are being made, will also be fruitful.

It is essential to bear in mind that a number of questions – the amnesty and exchange of prisoners – are important and sensitive issues not only for the Ukrainian Government but also for Donbas.

In conclusion, I should like to remind you that quite a few provisions of the Minsk agreements, in particular those concerning elections in Donbas and constitutional reform, involve reaching agreement with representatives of the Donbas militias. This needs to be kept in mind when drawing up various projects. The key to a sustainable and peaceful settlement of the Ukrainian crisis is real and direct dialogue between the Ukrainian Government and Donetsk and Luhansk.

Thank you for your attention.