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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
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AT THE 1285th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 October 2020

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to express our gratitude to the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship for organizing the briefing on 12 October with the participation of the Co-ordinator of the Political Working Group of the Minsk-based Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), Pierre Morel. The insights he provided into the intricacies of the work being undertaken on the political part of the settlement demonstrated under what difficult circumstances the Co-ordinator has to exert himself to find possible compromises between the representatives of the Ukrainian Government and Donbas.

For more than five years, since the signing of the Package of Measures on 12 February 2015, not a single one of its political provisions has been implemented in the form of at least one legislative act of Ukraine, previously agreed on with the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk and subsequently adopted and enacted. This applies among other things to granting special status to Donbas on a permanent basis, constitutional reform, an amnesty and local elections.

This year, the negotiation process in the TCG has been accompanied by the Ukrainian representatives' pretence at active participation in the discussions. Mr. Morel confirmed that the representatives of the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk had succeeded during the summer in exchanging views on some draft political decisions. However, this took place against the backdrop of public statements by high-ranking Ukrainian officials about their unwillingness in general to reach agreement on anything with the representatives of certain areas of Donbas. Incidentally, the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed this position a few days ago in an interview with the BBC. There was also an attempt to replace the real representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk in the TCG with people who have not lived in the region for a long time and do not participate in its public and political life. The Ukrainian Government obstructed the implementation of the agreement on the launch of the TCG Advisory Board, which had been expected to take on the task of working through the political instructions from the "Normandy format" summits. Finally – and we have drawn attention to this on numerous occasions – Ukraine's representatives keep on calling for the revision, under various pretexts, of the provisions of the Package of Measures. I would remind you that the Package was endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202 and remains the only internationally recognized framework for resolving the crisis in that country.

During the briefing, Mr. Morel confirmed that the organization of local elections in certain areas of Donbas is a key element in a comprehensive political settlement. However, the adoption on 15 July this year of the Verkhovna Rada resolution (no. 795-IX) on the scheduling of regular local elections in 2020 has put paid to that indefinitely. As Mr. Morel noted, the head of the Ukrainian delegation to the TCG, Leonid Kravchuk, recognized the contradictory nature of the instrument adopted and on 19 August called on the Parliament of Ukraine to provide essential clarifications as regards the resolution's conformity with the Package of Measures. There has been no response so far. On 29 September, the first deputy head of the Ukrainian delegation to the negotiations in Minsk, Vitold Fokin, also tried to establish dialogue with the parliamentarians but was unsuccessful. What is more, the following day, the President of Ukraine decided to remove Mr. Vitold from the delegation as a result of his having urged the members of the Verkhovna Rada to adhere to the letter and the spirit of the Package of Measures.

The differences between the statements and actions by Ukraine's representatives in public and those undertaken by them within the TCG, along with the discrepancies between what they say to a domestic audience and what they say during international contacts, suggest quite reasonably that there has never been a coherent plan on the part of the Ukrainian Government for implementing the Minsk agreements in full. And this is despite the fact that, in the final communiqué of the "Normandy format" summit held in Paris in December 2019, President Zelenskyy confirmed his commitment to the full implementation of the Package of Measures.

It is noteworthy that Mr. Kravchuk is convinced, as he stated on Ukrainian television on 5 October, that under the current conditions the first main task on the road to peace in Donbas is to secure another meeting in the "Normandy format". At the same time, the Ukrainian representatives are not bothered by the fact that the previous "Normandy format" instructions, which should have been translated into specific agreements and TCG decisions, have still not been carried out. It is surprising that, given these circumstances, some describe the Ukrainian Government's failure to implement the "Minsk" and "Normandy format" mandates as a demonstration of its supposedly "constructive approach". Nor do Ukraine's "minders" seem to particularly recall the Package of Measures.

The meetings of the TCG and its working groups via videoconference on 13 and 14 October merely confirmed that the Ukrainian Government still lacks the political will to strive for a comprehensive solution to the political and security issues, and also to issues in the humanitarian and socio-economic spheres. For example, Ukraine's representatives refused even to consider the draft road map for the implementation of the Minsk agreements, thus blocking the way out of the impasse in the negotiations. Instead, they again insisted on what they refer to as "modernization" of the Minsk agreements, but what actually amounts to rewriting these.

The ongoing conflict in Donbas is bringing fresh suffering to the region's inhabitants. Even during the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) continues to report regularly on the situation there. Incidentally, the measures adopted by the SMM a few days ago had a serious impact on the work of the monitoring team in the Luhansk region. We hope that the Mission will be able to overcome the difficulties it has encountered.

Since the measures to strengthen the ceasefire regime came into effect (they entered into force on 27 July in accordance with a TCG decision of 22 July 2020), the SMM has recorded over 1,600 violations of the "silence regime" in total. There have been reports of mine blast injuries to civilians. The Ukrainian military continues to deploy weapons and equipment in residential areas: for example, over the past two weeks, the SMM has spotted six surface-to-air missile systems and several armoured vehicles belonging to

the Ukrainian armed forces near residential buildings in the settlements of Taramchuk, Chernenko, Mykolaivka and Bobrove.

We are concerned about reports that the Ukrainian Joint Forces Operation command plans to close the only permanently operational checkpoint on the line of contact in the Luhansk region – Stanytsia Luhanska – from 15 October until at least the end of this month for regular civilian traffic. All of this coupled with the Ukrainian Government's measures regarding the socio-economic blockade of the region creates additional difficulties for the people living in Donbas, many of whom are obliged to cross the line of contact regularly in order to collect their pensions or other social security benefits. Last week, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group, Heidi Grau, emphasized this topic in particular and called on the Ukrainian Government to finally work out unbureaucratic solutions for targeted payments to the residents of certain areas of Donbas. This should be done in the interests of restoring socio-economic ties, as provided for in the Package of Measures (paragraph 8).

The settlement of the crisis in the east of the country is complicated considerably by the Ukrainian authorities' pandering to aggressive nationalism. On 14 October, nationalist marches to mark the anniversary of the founding of the "Ukrainian Insurgent Army" in 1942 took place in a number of cities in Ukraine. I would remind you that members of that army had a hand in many atrocities against Jews, Poles, Ukrainians, Russians and people of other nationalities. These marches have traditionally been accompanied by xenophobic slogans and threats of violence against those who do not subscribe to notions of Ukrainian national exclusivity. Anti-Semitic chanting was even heard on the steps of the Ukrainian President's Office.

The campaign to falsify the history of the Second World War continues in Ukraine, and cynical attempts are being made to whitewash war criminals and their accomplices. It is indicative that earlier the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine demanded the withdrawal of history textbooks for grades 10 to 11 containing information about the collaboration of the "Ukrainian Insurgent Army" commander, Roman Shukhevych, with the Nazis. It is also symptomatic that Ukraine stubbornly votes against the annual United Nations General Assembly resolution on combating the glorification of Nazism.

None of this is conducive to nationwide harmony. The cultivation – with the approval of the Ukrainian authorities – of aggressively nationalistic ideas and the various manifestations of neo-Nazism and xenophobia require close attention and a response from the OSCE. We reiterate our call on the SMM to catalogue all this information in a separate thematic report.

Once again, we note that the crisis in Ukraine is the result of the February 2014 coup d'état, which was orchestrated, funded and organized from abroad and has led to the armed confrontation in Donbas and the wholesale suffering of millions of civilians.

We call on the OSCE and Ukraine's external "minders" to bring maximum influence to bear on the Ukrainian leadership in order to induce it to act in the interests of peace and civil harmony, with a view to swift implementation of the Package of Measures on the basis of direct and meaningful dialogue between the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk.

Thank you for your attention.