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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1180th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

22 March 2018

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The “spring ceasefire” in Donbas has reduced somewhat the number of ceasefire violations and use of weapons prohibited by the Minsk agreements, but shooting has intensified over recent days. There has been renewed shelling of populated areas, resulting in civilian casualties. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) reported that a woman was injured in Kominternove on 14 March, and that a building in Sakhanka was damaged on 17 March following shelling from the direction of Ukrainian armed forces’ positions.

On 12 and 13 March, the Ukrainian forces fired at a bus carrying employees of the Donetsk Filtration Station (DFS). Analysis of the damage leaves no doubt as to the direction from which the fire came. We thank the SMM monitors who, since 14 March, have been escorting the DFS employees.

The situation is very worrying because the Ukrainian armed forces are using the ceasefire to regroup forces and strengthen their positions. They have taken position within the disengagement areas at Petrivske and Zolote. The SMM has spotted Ukrainian soldiers, flags, equipment and ammunition there. The amount of Ukrainian forces’ military equipment on the line of contact continues to increase. Over the past week, in government-controlled territory, the SMM monitors spotted more than 30 pieces of weaponry in violation of the Minsk Package of Measures, including four multiple-launch rocket systems in Khibodarivka. They also confirmed that Ukrainian forces are conducting live-fire exercises near the line of contact.

On 18 March, the Ukrainian Government again openly refused to begin withdrawal of forces at Stanytsia Luhanska, despite the fact that all conditions for withdrawal had been met and the militia had signalled their readiness to begin disengagement.

We call on all OSCE participating States with substantial influence on the Ukrainian Government to make every possible effort to prevent a military escalation in Donbas. General Serhiy Nayev, the new commander of the punitive operation in Donbas, which is now called “combined forces operation”, said publicly that he will speak with Donbas using the language of force alone. This is a road to disaster.

We support the initiative of Donetsk and Luhansk to reconfirm ceasefires for the Easter period, which should, finally, establish a full and stable ceasefire along the line of contact.

We reiterate that a lasting and peaceful settlement of the Ukrainian crisis is possible only through full implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures, including the provisions on comprehensive political settlement through direct dialogue between Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk.

We urge that this process not be delayed because the situation in Ukraine is showing every sign of further destabilization.

Radical nationalists continue to pressure the authorities. The SMM has reported on new demonstrations by the radicals and an upsurge in nationalism that is increasingly visible in Ukraine’s western regions. Over the past week alone, nine cars with Hungarian licence plates were damaged in Uzhgorod and Berehove, a hand grenade was thrown into a house, activists protesting against a march by nationalists were beaten up and the march in question went ahead on 17 March. There have been widespread celebrations in Ukraine of the birthdays of war criminals associated with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and other “black pages” in history.

The radicals attempt to put pressure on the courts. On 15 March, they lit flares in front of the court building in Kyiv where hearings on the Maidan events were taking place. On 14 March, they gathered in front of the Italian embassy in Kyiv with demands to free the man suspected of murdering journalist Andrea Rocchelli.

Attacks on the Orthodox Church continue. On 10 March, a chapel in Kyiv was burned. This is yet another crime by the radicals acting as part of the campaign of intolerance against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church started by the far right group C14. We share the concerns of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) regarding the fact that the law enforcement agencies have not taken effective measures to prevent these actions, fully investigate them, and bring those responsible to justice.

Work is under way on a new draft law on the State language, which will not take into account the language rights of Ukraine’s national minorities. We urge the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities to follow this matter closely and not allow total Ukrainization of the country.

The website “Mirotvorets” continues to operate on servers in the United States of America and publishes the personal details of journalists and opponents to the Ukrainian Government’s policies. The UN OHCHR has said that publication of personal information of journalists and NGO activists on this resource violates the right to inviolability of private life and the presumption of innocence.

Nadiya Savchenko was detained at the Verkhovna Rada itself and has been charged with allegedly preparing a terrorist attack. Information on her has also been published on the “Mirotvorets” site. We are sure that those who followed her fate so closely three or four years ago will be interested to learn what is happening now to this “hero of Ukraine”.

Persecution of journalists continues unabated in Ukraine. On 17 March, the Ukrainian authorities deported under a fictitious pretext Natalia Goncharova, a journalist at the TV channel Rossiya 24. We note that the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media drew attention to this outrageous action by the Ukrainian authorities on his Twitter account. We hope to see a more substantial response to this unlawful action.

This is now the eighth case of Russian journalists falling victim to actions involving force in violation of Ukraine’s international obligations and national legislation. From 16 November 2017 to 15 February 2018, the UN OHCHR documented nine cases of physical attacks or use of force against journalists, carried out by State agents or by members of far right groups acting with impunity. No progress has been made in investigating violence against journalists, and this feeds the atmosphere of impunity and fear. Those responsible for the murders of Oles Buzina and Pavel Sheremet have yet to be identified.

Even harsher methods are used against opponents of the policy of militant nationalism and Russophobia. The Ukrainian Security Service continues to run secret prisons. Amnesty International recently presented fresh evidence of these prisons’ existence. It cited cases of torture and illegal detention without trial or investigation. Amnesty International has stated that by denying the existence of these secret prisons, the Ukrainian authorities are preventing victims from obtaining justice and are obstructing investigation into serious ongoing human rights violations.

The UN OHCHR has documented new cases of unlawful detention, torture and cruel treatment on government-controlled territory. Victims have been abducted by people in masks and have been beaten and threatened, forcing them to confess to supposed collaboration with Russian intelligence services or armed formations. Arrests by the Ukrainian Security Service followed. We see a lack of progress in ensuring that those responsible for serious human rights violations during the murders of protesters on the Maidan and the violence of 2 May 2014 in Odessa are held accountable. In the investigations and trials related to the conflict we see the reluctance of the law enforcement agencies and the political leadership to effectively investigate human rights violations committed by State agents.

Apologists for the Ukrainian regime say that we should not criticize the nationalists because they are supposedly strengthening Ukraine’s sovereignty. But it would be a grave mistake to believe this. No one has done so much to worsen the situation in Ukraine and undermine its sovereignty and unity as the nationalists. It is they who are the main conduits today for this policy of resolving the crisis using force. It is they who oppose a peaceful settlement, dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk, and implementation of the Minsk agreements.

There are enough reasonable people in Ukraine who reject the ideas of war, hatred and imposed Russophobia, but they find themselves living today in an atmosphere of an

imminent total ban on dissent and are caught between severe pressure from the nationalists on the one hand and the security forces on the other.

In conclusion, we reiterate Russia's full commitment to a peaceful settlement in Ukraine and we are ready to do all we can to facilitate this through all existing negotiating formats. The only possible solution to the crisis is to implement the Minsk Package of Measures through direct dialogue between Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk.