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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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1342nd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

28 October 2021

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

Madam Chairperson,

We are yet again obliged to note that the process for settling the crisis in Ukraine is at an impasse.

The meetings of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) and its working groups on 26 and 27 October via videoconference failed, again, to achieve any results. No specific decisions on practical matters were reached. The Ukrainian Government continues to avoid a substantive discussion with the representatives of certain areas of Donbas on all aspects of the settlement process, despite the fact that direct dialogue with them is stipulated by the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, which was endorsed by United Nations Security resolution 2202.

As for the Normandy format, which has an oversight role with regard to the TCG's work, the situation is no better. The instructions of the Normandy Four leaders enshrined in the common agreed conclusions of the summit of 9 December 2019 have yet to be carried out. Instead of implementing them, the authorities in Kyiv are merely harping on about their desire to hold a new meeting at any of the Normandy format's levels. We must stress that there is no point in such meetings until it has been ascertained that previous "Normandy format" instructions have been implemented. One such earlier instruction was the call for an immediate de-escalation on the line of contact, which was to be strengthened by the implementation of all the necessary measures to support the ceasefire.

These measures, which the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk agreed on at the TCG on 22 July 2020, contributed to a temporary reduction of tensions. The present-day reality indicates that their effect has waned almost entirely. Over the past few weeks, we have been observing the tactic of deliberate provocation of violence on the line of contact in Donbas by the Ukrainian armed forces. Representatives of the armed forces regularly make official statements from which it may be concluded that the Ukrainian Government is demonstrably not implementing the aforementioned measures. In particular, there are reports that, inside the zone where the military operation in Donbas is being conducted, Ukrainian military personnel are not subject to restrictions on opening fire. At the same time, the Ukrainian Government is undermining the prospects for monitoring compliance with the "silence regime" on the basis of the existing agreements. Let us cite some examples of these violations.

On 7 October, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) discovered a camouflaged trench of the Ukrainian armed forces inside the area for the disengagement of forces and hardware near Zolote. On 13 October, while members of the militia were carrying out demining work on the southern edge of that disengagement area, the Ukrainian military and intelligence services kidnapped Andrey Kosyak, a representative of Luhansk to the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC). This JCCC officer has so far not been repatriated to Luhansk, and no details are forthcoming on the conditions in which he is being held at a Ukrainian detention centre. Neither his relatives nor his lawyers are being allowed to see him.

Mr. Kosyak was one of several representatives of Luhansk to the JCCC who was unable to get out unscathed from the disengagement area during the special operation by the Ukrainian military and intelligence services. An “open hunting season” on members of the JCCC from Luhansk was essentially proclaimed that day. Thus, after the start of the Ukrainian security forces’ special operation, a second representative of Luhansk to the JCCC had to leave the disengagement area with the SMM’s assistance. This is confirmed by video footage published in the media, in which it can be seen how a Mission patrol helped him to make his way out towards the outskirts of Pervomaisk.

It would seem that the Ukrainians are seeking to discredit the JCCC in its current setting altogether so as to avoid having their compliance with the “silence regime” monitored. Last week, the media were awash with images of an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) belonging to the 25th Separate Airborne Brigade of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (stationed near the Donetsk filtration station) that had been shot down by the militia. A scene was caught on video in which it could be seen how a 120 mm mortar was set up near a white lorry with the inscription “JCCC”; the back of the lorry itself was open. It is unacceptable that the Ukrainians should be using equipment bearing JCCC insignia for combat purposes. We call on the SMM to carefully monitor movements of such equipment and to report on any attempts to use it in the course of combat operations.

The shelling of residential areas by the Ukrainian armed forces led to new casualties last week. All these facts are still to be confirmed by the SMM, which, as reported, resumed full-scale monitoring on 23 October. According to information from the representation of Donetsk to the JCCC, a resident of the Petrovskiyi district of Donetsk was injured on 22 October. The settlement of Telmanove came under shelling from the Ukrainian armed forces on 26 October. As a result, 12 transformer substations were left without power, which meant that the electricity supply to a hospital, a school, a boiler house and 350 consumers was cut off. An impact site was also recorded in the area of the municipal water conduit. A residential building in the settlement of Nova Marivka was damaged. The attempts by the representatives of Donetsk to activate a co-ordination mechanism for quickly establishing a ceasefire were ignored by the Ukrainian side in the JCCC.

The Ukrainian military is provoking tensions in the “grey zone”. Thus, on 25 October, the Ukrainian armed forces gained control of the settlement of Staromarivka in the south of the Donetsk region – this despite the fact that all offensive operations are banned under the ceasefire-strengthening measures of 22 July 2020. I would remind you that the fortification of positions and any attempts to change the positioning of troops are considered to be offensive operations. On that same day, images appeared in the media showing Ukrainian armoured vehicles driving through the streets of Staromarivka. As reported by the press, once the settlement had been occupied, the Ukrainian security forces set about “sifting through” the local population. This begs the question of why there was no early warning by the SMM about the massing of forces by one of the belligerents and the advance of those forces. Where is the spot report dealing with what happened? It is essential to monitor carefully the situation on the ground and to include in the reports confirmed facts pertaining to the offensive operations of the Ukrainian military. We must stress that this is not the first episode leading to escalation to have taken place under the Mission’s very nose.

Incidentally, the distinguished Permanent Representative of Ukraine just mentioned that the Ukrainian military remained in their positions and did not violate anything. However, we have right before us fresh examples of how representatives of Ukraine have misinformed the international community as regards the actions of their military in Donbas. One need only think of the episode involving an MON-90 anti-personnel fragmentation mine that had been laid by the Ukrainian armed forces close to a checkpoint near the city of Popasna in the Luhansk region. In the SMM's daily report dated 19 October it is noted that, on 16 October, the Mission received written confirmation from the representation of Ukraine to the JCCC that the mine in question, which posed a threat to the lives of the SMM monitors, had been removed. However, two days later, the patrol saw that the mine was still there, which meant that the SMM was unable to make use of the route between Popasna and Pervomaisk. And this is just one of the confirmed disinformation acts undertaken by the Ukrainians.

Reports of how the operations in the area of Staromarivka were accompanied by the Ukrainian armed forces' use of a foreign unmanned combat aerial vehicle are extremely alarming. The use of such technology is prohibited under the Minsk agreements. Moreover, flights by any type of UAV, except for those belonging to the SMM, are not allowed under the ceasefire-strengthening measures either. It is remarkable that the Ukrainian military is making contradictory statements – openly acknowledging its violations on the one hand, and refuting them on the other. A few days ago, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine officially confirmed that a Bayraktar UAV system had been put to combat use on 25 October against militia positions in the area of Hranitne, which happens to be a settlement neighbouring Staromarivka. Yesterday, on the other hand, this was refuted in Ukrainian media by the Minister of Defence, Andrii Taran.

In this way, by simultaneously carrying out provocative shelling, publishing statements in the media that directly contradict one another and committing violations in terms of troop repositioning, the Ukrainian Government is trying to provoke the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk into resuming hostilities. We may again rightly ask where is the OSCE Chairmanship's response to these violations of the de-escalation measures by the Ukrainian armed forces? We stress that it is also necessary to carefully record in the SMM reports all the instances of violations of the ceasefire-strengthening measures.

A further episode involving the combat use of a UAV for sabotage purposes occurred on 27 October. This was yet another attempt to inflict damage on an oil terminal in Donetsk (the previous one was on 11 September and almost had highly tragic consequences). By means of a UAV, a payload was dropped on the roof of a fuel reservoir. We call on the Mission to record this instance, too, as promptly as possible.

At the same time, some participating States continue to bankroll the further militarization of Ukraine, helping to pump the country full of ever new weaponry. In addition to the already mentioned Turkish Bayraktar UAVs, the latest shipment of US military equipment deserves special attention: worth 60 million US dollars, it was delivered in time for the arrival in Kyiv of the US Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin, and included missile systems and ammunition. The potential supplies of British missiles to the Ukrainian Government are not likely either to contribute to peace in Donbas (*The Times* reported last week on the talks held on this subject).

The militarization of Ukraine and the pandering to the revanchist aspirations of the "war party" in Kyiv are preventing a settlement of the internal Ukrainian conflict. Nor do we hear the sponsors of the current Ukrainian authorities condemn the actions of the Ukrainian armed forces that are leading to escalation. As we may see, the *carte blanche* given to the Ukrainian Government was used a few days ago by Ukraine's politico-military leadership to undertake offensive operations in Donbas.

Moreover, those very hotheads continue to be primed through the training missions of NATO countries in Ukraine. The current situation in that country suggests that its authorities are under pressure from assorted radical nationalists, if not altogether under their thumb. A report published in September by a US institution, the George Washington University, draws attention to the issue of how Western States are involved in the military training of Ukrainian neo-Nazis in the ranks of the Ukrainian armed forces. I am referring, for example, to the members of the far-right organization Centuria who managed to infiltrate the Hetman Petro Sahaidachny National Land Forces Academy and who, alongside other students, underwent training under the supervision of instructors from the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom and a number of other countries. These instances of military training being provided to nationalists who make no bones about their extremist views have already awakened concern in North America, notably among members of the Jewish community.

We have repeatedly drawn the OSCE's attention to the problem of rampant radicalism and the glorification of Nazi accomplices in Ukraine. All this is accompanied by actions on the part of the authorities at various levels aimed at combating the historical memory of the victory over Nazism in the Second World War. Thus, on 26 October, a memorial representing the Order of the Patriotic War (known as the Victory Star) at the Marsove Pole (Field of Mars) in Lviv was destroyed at the behest of nationalists and with the support of the local authorities. And all this on the eve of the 77th anniversary of Ukraine's liberation from the Nazi invaders! Earlier this year, in July, another act of vandalism was committed with the approval of the Lviv city council, namely the dismantling of the Monument to Military Glory that had been erected to honour the Soviet soldiers of different nationalities who fell fighting to liberate Ukraine. It was dismantled on the pretext of its being in a dilapidated state. Significantly, even with the use of special equipment, it did not prove possible to destroy this allegedly "dilapidated" monument at the first attempt. Against this backdrop, vandals in the city of Vynnyky in the Lviv region decapitated the statue of a Red Army soldier at a cenotaph for fallen soldiers.

In this connection, we should like to draw attention to the report issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia on 22 October on the glorification of Nazism in a number of countries. The section on Ukraine in that report is most extensive. We would also remind you of the long-overdue need for a corresponding thematic report by the SMM to be issued.

A few words by way of conclusion. The path to peace in Ukraine lies in implementation in good faith by the country's authorities of their international legal obligations. We call on the external "guardians" of the Ukrainian leadership to make their "charges" aware of the full perniciousness of the Ukrainian Government's policy of exacerbating social conflicts and stoking armed violence in Donbas.

Thank you for your attention.