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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1145th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 May 2017

**In response to the reports by the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special
Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, and the
Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and
in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Martin Sajdik**

Mr. Chairperson,
Ambassadors Apakan and Sajdik,

Let me begin with some words of support for the monitors of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), who are working in Ukraine under dangerous conditions. We appreciate that the Mission has had to introduce some internal restrictions. The safety of the SMM comes first. Ensuring this safety is a matter not only of appropriate precautionary measures on the part of the monitors, but also the responsibility of the parties to the conflict themselves. Closer contacts between the monitors and the authorities on the ground are vital in this context. We once again emphasize the practical advantages of having representatives of the people's militia of Donbas return to the Russian-Ukrainian Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC). This would make the co-ordination of security issues and further work on incidents involving the monitors considerably easier.

It is essential to clarify promptly all the circumstances surrounding the explosion involving the SMM vehicle near Pryshyb on 23 April, which resulted in the death of a US citizen. We call for full co-operation in the investigation being conducted by the authorities of certain areas of the Luhansk region and for use to be made of the channels of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) and the JCCC. It is important to establish why the stretch of the road on which the explosion occurred was filmed from the Ukrainian side of the line of contact? (The video has been posted on the Internet.) There is more and more reason to believe that this incident was a deliberate provocation. We expect the Ukrainian Government to provide the original recording.

Almost on a daily basis, reports are received from the conflict zone about incidents involving mines and explosive devices. The Ukrainian armed forces continue to lay mines along the line of contact in violation of the TCG decision of 3 March 2016. In its report dated 8 May, the SMM revealed that new mines had been laid in security force-controlled territory

at Zolote-1, in Popasna and near the Ukrainian armed forces' checkpoint next to the Donetsk filtration plant. The work of Ukrainian armed forces' commandos in the conflict zone is increasing. On 3 May, a Ukrainian armed forces' commando team consisting of four people attempted to cross into militia-controlled territory near Svitlodarsk-Debaltseve for the purpose of planting explosives. According to information corroborated by the SMM, the bodies of the dead commandos were handed over to government forces. On 8 May, there was another assassination attempt on the leader of certain areas of the Donetsk region, Alexander Zakharchenko. Two explosive devices went off before his motorcade reached the road leading to the Saur-Mogila memorial complex.

We roundly condemn any threats against the monitors. This applies to all cases – from the explosion involving the SMM vehicle and the shelling of patrols with mortars, as happened near Kominternove on 10 March, to the disgraceful behaviour of armed men, especially under the influence of alcohol, which has been reported on both sides of the line of contact.

Restrictions on the freedom of movement of the monitors occur on both sides of the line of contact. Whole areas directly bordering on the line of contact in territory controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces – near Shchastia, Stanytsia Luhanska, Popasna, Katerynivka, Bohdanivka and other places – are completely closed off to the SMM under the pretext of the threat posed by mines. Particular attention needs to be paid to these areas.

As for the manipulation of the SMM data on the amount of equipment not withdrawn beyond the relevant lines, it is clear from the SMM reports that these statistics include equipment used during the Victory Day parade. Even a tank sent by the militia for demining operations is counted as a violation of the Minsk agreements.

We urge our colleagues not to be deceived – the shelling of towns and infrastructure facilities in Donbas is carried out using different weapons, and they are deployed on the other side of the line of contact. It is regrettable that, owing to security concerns, the SMM monitors cannot record all the equipment belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces. However, it is impossible to conceal the consequences of the use of these weapons.

Even limited monitoring by the SMM shows the continuing indiscriminate shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces of militia-controlled territory. According to the latest information from the Mission, a resident of Dokuchaievsk has been killed, three people have been injured in Donetsk, and houses have been damaged in Bezimenne, Kominternove, Stakhanov and Frunze. On 7 and 8 May, the SMM cameras in Avdiivka and Shyrokyne and at the Oktiabr mine recorded that the intense exchanges of fire were initiated by shots fired upon militia-controlled territory from the direction where the Ukrainian armed forces are stationed.

The disengagement of forces and hardware merits particular attention. This process has reached a deadlock because of Ukraine, which is deliberately disrupting the withdrawal from the Stanytsia Luhanska area. On 3 May, the SMM camera installed there recorded one projectile in flight from north-north-east (Ukrainian armed forces' positions) to south-south-west, followed by an exchange of fire.

Distinguished colleagues,

The Ukrainian Government's policy aimed at forcing Donbas out of the Ukrainian political and economic space is deeply alarming. The termination of social security payments and the provision of State services, the closing down of banks, the restrictions on the movement of people and goods across the line of contact, the turning off of the electricity and water supply, and the blockade – all these steps are contrary to the logic of the Minsk agreements.

We see that dialogue in the TCG follows the pattern of “one step forward and two steps back”. In the Working Group on Political Issues, the Ukrainian Government is not even willing to set out on paper the Steinmeier formula, which provides for the holding of elections and the enactment of the law on the special status of Donbas.

The key to the settlement of intra-Ukrainian dialogue lies in the full implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures. It is necessary to begin direct dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk and provide the inhabitants with legal and material guarantees that their rights will be respected. This requires the enactment of the law on special status and its consolidation in the Constitution of Ukraine, the holding of local elections, the assurance that people will not be prosecuted in connection with the events in eastern Ukraine, and the restoration of the humanitarian, economic and financial ties that have been severed.

We call on our colleagues and the SMM monitors to pay closer attention to the situation throughout the territory of Ukraine and not just in the conflict zone. The Mission has ample resources to do this. It is important that the SMM endeavours to be present at high-profile public events.

We take note of the courage and the loyalty to their ideals and values of the thousands and thousands of Ukrainians, who attended the memorial events on 9 May in honour of the victory over Nazism. This is an act of bravery in Ukraine today.

The followers of Nazi supporters – modern-day Ukrainian nationalists from the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalism, the so-called Azov regiment, the Right Sector and others – vigorously tried to prevent this. They attacked those participating in the peaceful marches and war veterans. In some cities, this went unpunished.

And in those cases where members of the law enforcement agencies managed to protect the demonstrators from attacks by nationalist provocateurs, this resulted in a negative response from the Ukrainian Government. In today's Ukraine, it is possible to lose not only one's position, but also one's freedom and even one's life, by standing up to radicals and nationalists.

The ban introduced in Ukraine on the use of the symbols of victory cannot fail to arouse indignation. This year, Ukraine was the only country among more than 50 States of the world where the police detained peaceful demonstrators for using Soviet symbols in a non-violent manner.

The so-called decommunization in Ukraine goes hand in hand with a campaign to rehabilitate Nazism and distort and falsify history. The atrocities of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, which killed thousands of

civilians, including Ukrainians, Jews and Poles, are being passed off as a struggle for freedom. Attempts to add the Ukrainian Insurgent Army to the ranks of those who defeated Nazism leave one speechless.

Among the recent examples are the criminal proceedings instituted in April by the Ukrainian prosecutor's office against a 94-year-old veteran of the Great Patriotic War, Boris Steckler. He is accused of eliminating in 1952 an active member of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and Nazi collaborator, Nil Khasevych. What will happen next? Perhaps the Ukrainian prosecutor's office will go after the Nazi hunters? We firmly believe that the weapons of those engaging in decommunization will inevitably turn against them.

The manifestations of aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism in Ukraine fall entirely under the mandate of the SMM. Torchlit marches by neo-Nazis, attacks on veterans of the Great Patriotic War, Nazi symbols in the insignia of "volunteer battalions", the desecration of monuments to Soviet soldiers and the Babi Yar memorial, and other manifestations of anti-Semitism – all of this has unfortunately become commonplace in Ukraine.

We call on the monitors not to turn a blind eye to this, to report in detail on all such cases as well as on harassment of journalists and attacks on the Orthodox Church. The publication of a consolidated thematic report by the SMM in this regard is long overdue.

In conclusion, let me thank Ambassadors Sajdik and Apakan and wish the monitors every success.

Thank you for your attention.