

Statement by Alexander Lukashевич, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, at the meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council on the situation in Ukraine and the need to fulfill the Minsk Agreements, Vienna, June 14, 2018

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Mr Chairman,

The foreign ministers of the Normandy format met in Berlin on June 11 to analyse the progress status of the implementation of the Minsk Agreements by the parties to the conflict - Kiev, Donetsk and Lugansk. An understanding was reached of the imperative of implementing the Package of Measures supported by the leaders of the four in 2015 and 2016, including its political provisions. The foreign ministers agreed on the urgent de-escalation in Donbass, the establishment of a ceasefire, the disengagement of forces and weapons, including heavy weapons withdrawal, and the protection of critical civilian infrastructure. The importance of resolving humanitarian problems, the release of detained persons was also reaffirmed.

On June 6, the UN Security Council adopted a statement by the Chairman of the Council, which clearly indicated the need for strict abidance by the Package of Measures, approved in 2015 by UN Security Council Resolution 2202, as well as measures agreed in the Normandy format and by the Contact Group.

We hope that these signals will lead Kiev to show restraint, abandon reckless military schemes and return back to the implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures, which remains the unquestionable basis for a peaceful settlement.

On June 13, the Contact Group reached an agreement at a meeting in Minsk to ensure safety during the rotation of the workers of the Donetsk filtering station. We expect that the Ukrainian side relays the necessary message to the commanders of the Armed Forces on the ground. We support the proposal of the coordinator of the subgroup on security, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) Ertugrul Apakan, on taking urgent measures to cease fire. The publication of the orders on the non-use of weapons, the ban on reciprocal fire, confirmation of obligations under existing agreements, the ban on offensive actions and the sending of sabotage groups can be an important step towards de-escalation. Attempts to hamper these constructive initiatives by insisting on artificial linkages are unacceptable. We welcome Humanitarian Subgroup Coordinator Tony Frisch's proposals on declaring the non-use of torture against prisoners. We call for an early agreement on repairing the bridge in Stanitsa Luganskaya on the basis of the ICRC proposals.

The Ukrainian crisis is taking too long. Its role in mongering Russophobia is coming at a cost for the Ukrainian people. We cannot help recalling the fourth anniversary of the Ukrainian air raid on Lugansk on June 2, which killed eight people and injured 28. Ukrainian representatives then tried to deny the use of some 20 aerial bombs blaming the damage on an air conditioner explosion at the state administration building - typical of the current Kiev authorities.

For four years Kiev's punitive operation idea has not changed. Its criminal goal is to intimidate the people of Donbass, to sow hatred and destruction. Unfortunately, the deterrent effect of the Ukrainian army's military defeats in winter 2015, which led to the signing of the Minsk Package of Measures, is eroding. We need a consolidated call for Kiev to faithfully fulfill its commitments.

With the beginning of the Joint Forces Operation, the Ukrainian Armed Forces intensified their military operations in Donbass. The Ukrainian security forces tried to implement local forays near Gorlovka and Mariupol, which cost them significant losses. Kiev is seizing the demilitarised areas of Zolotoye and Petrovskoye, while the armed units of certain districts in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions have stopped short of this.

According to the SMM, three Donbass civilians have been killed and nine wounded as a result of indiscriminate shelling since May 31. The most egregious case occurred on June 7 in Kirovsk, where the Ukrainian military struck a mortar round on a shuttle bus, injuring five women and two men.

The SMM has confirmed the reports of the village of Chigari in the 'grey zone' near Gorlovka being occupied by the Ukrainian forces. The fighting unleashed by Kiev has resulted in most of the houses either being destroyed or burnt down in this village, and running water and other basic necessities are unavailable. The surviving structures house Ukrainian soldiers, and ammunition depots. Civilians are being forced to leave. The Ukrainian security forces have moved dangerously close to the militia positions. A new hotbed of instability has emerged.

*To be continued...*