

Statement by Dmitry Balakin, 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 21, 2018

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Mr Chairman,

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Tensions are rising in Donbass again. According to Principal Deputy Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) Alexander Hug in his interview with the Russian newspaper Kommersant on June 19, the number of violations of the ceasefire has increased by 70 percent, and the number of armaments violating the withdrawal line has grown four times during the last week.

Once again Kiev provokes military tensions in Donbass. The artillery of the Joint Forces Operation shells densely populated Donbass districts on the other side of the contact line. According to the SMM data, four civilians have been wounded in the Kuibyshev District of Donetsk (June 11), Kirovsk (June 14) and the village of Zhelobok (June 17); schools and other buildings have been damaged or destroyed in Dokuchayevsk (June 12 and 14), Kominternovo (June 12, 14, 15 and 16), Krasny Partizan (June 12), Donetsk (June 12), Golubovsky (June 14) and Mikhailovsk (June 16) during 13 attacks coming from the dispositions of the Ukrainian Armed Forces since June 12. The SMM have confirmed instances of drones crossing the contact line from the side controlled by the Ukrainian Armed Forces in violation of the Minsk Agreements.

Ukrainian security officials continue to violate their obligations to withdraw troops and armaments. The ceasefire has been in force in the village of Luganskaya for almost a month, since May 23, but the Ukrainian Armed Forces have not begun withdrawing. During a meeting of the Normandy Format foreign ministers we drew attention to Kiev's violation of Contact Group's Framework Agreement signed on September 21, 2016.

Kiev is moving additional offensive forces to the contact line. On June 12 – 19, the SMM recorded 53 units of heavy equipment of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in violation of the Minsk Package of Measures, as well as 151 units right next to the withdrawal line.

The situation around the Donetsk water filtering plant remains complicated. The Ukrainian military maintain their fortified positions in the immediate vicinity to this critical site. Unfortunately, ambiguous accusations that Donbass fighters were the first to approach the plant only aggravate the armed confrontation.

It is gratifying that several UN humanitarian agencies have registered in Donbass given the difficult situation in the region. In Donetsk there are UNICEF, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, and the International Organisation for Migration. In Lugansk, in addition to these organisations, there is the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

We call on Kiev again to heed the signals communicated during the meeting of the foreign ministers of the Normandy Four in Berlin on June 11 and the Contact Group meetings, including the latest one on June 13. We should start working on concrete urgent measures for reaching a ceasefire put forward by the head of the Special Monitoring Mission Ertugrul Apakan. We expect Ukraine to issue orders not to use weapons or return fire, to reaffirm its obligations under the existing agreements, to vow not to attempt offensive actions and send in groups of saboteurs. It is necessary to achieve strict adherence to the ceasefire, speedy disengagement of forces and hardware withdrawal of heavy weapons, mine clearance and an end to shooting drills near the contact line.

Steps in this direction will help reduce tension in the east of Ukraine.

The view of Donbass as a "cancerous tumour on Ukraine," which was marginal only recently, seems to keep winning new adherents among officials in Kiev. No other explanation can be found for Kiev's stubborn refusal to meet its political commitments under the Minsk Package of Measures. Attempts to isolate Donbass or reintegrate it by force are a road to self-destruction for Ukraine. The peaceful alternative to this is the complete and comprehensive fulfilment of the Minsk Agreements with the rights and lawful interests of Donbass citizens guaranteed. We call on Kiev to incorporate the Frank Walter Steinmeier formula into the law on the special status of certain areas of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions. This formula links holding local elections in Donbass with the law taking effect. For almost two years the Ukrainian authorities have persistently evaded their obligations assumed at the Normandy format summit in Paris in October 2, 2015 and reaffirmed in Berlin on October 19, 2016. It is necessary to step up talks on the political aspects of Minsk Agreements, such as adopting the election law, making amendments to the constitution and enacting the amnesty.

So far the Ukrainian authorities demonstrate their unwillingness to begin a serious conversation within the Contact Group to lead the Minsk process out of deadlock, especially during a presidential election campaign which has essentially already begun in Kiev.

Ukrainian news is increasingly nothing more than bulletins on military operations all over the country. Explosions and gunfire sound far beyond the east of Ukraine. On June 14, following the detonation of an explosive device, four teenagers were badly injured in the Svyatoshynsky District of Kiev. Just as the army and police warehouses were seized during the Maidan, now weapons supplied by western countries are uncontrollably spreading from Donbass all over Ukraine. There is no guarantee that weapons will not flow across the border.

In this context, radical outlaws represent a growing danger in Ukraine. In an attempt to consolidate society on the basis of hate for everything Russian, Kiev encourages Ukrainian nationalists' crimes. In their open letter to the Minister of the Interior and the Prosecutor General of Ukraine published on June 14, Amnesty International, Front Line Defenders, Human Rights Watch and Freedom House drew attention to the activities of nationalist groups, such as S14, Right Sector, Tradition and Order, and Carpathian Sich. Human rights defenders came to the logical conclusion that radicals' impunity is a sign that they operate with consent of the authorities. The address contains an appeal to Kiev to publicly condemn radicalism, investigate crimes committed by nationalists and prosecute the guilty. This is an additional signal to the Special Monitoring Mission to speed up work on its report on manifestations of radical nationalism, neo-Nazism, extremism and xenophobia in Ukraine.

In its reports, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine notes more pronounced aggressive nationalism in the country. In its 22<sup>nd</sup> quarterly report, presented on June 20 in Geneva, the Mission confirms that the Ukrainian authorities are involving the C14 and National Corps radical groups in law-enforcement activities. Law-enforcement agencies are responsible for numerous arbitrary arrests, torture, degrading treatment and sexual violence. The report notes an upsurge of violence directed against media representatives. In all, 21 attacks and 71 freedom-of-the-press violations have been recorded from February 16 until May 15. The report notes the appearance of the Parasite Centre media resource that aims to harass journalists on a par with the Mirotvoret website. However, the report also contains biased assessments of the situation in Russian Crimea not covered by the Monitoring Mission's mandate.

Ukrainian nationalists, the paramilitary wing of street democracy, are actively evolving into state policy architects. Their political weight continues to increase. Various political forces are vying for the loyalty of the radicals and are ready to pay for their support.

The law On Education being actively supported by nationalists hinges on the ideology of ethnocide. Kiev ignores its own international obligations in this sphere as well as the warnings on the part of the international community. The law On Education, together with the abolition of the law on the foundations of the state language policy, directly violate Kiev's obligations as regards the OSCE and the Minsk Package of Measures stipulating the right to language self-determination to Donbass regions.

The voices of those disagreeing with Kiev's policies continue to be suppressed. Apart from intimidating dissidents, the state continues to use its entire range of suppression tools. Journalists who are trying to provide objective coverage of national developments are being harassed. The other day, the Security Service of Ukraine issued an instruction on blocking 181 media outlets seen as ideologically unsafe by Ukrainian authorities. RIA Novosti Ukraine Head Kirill Vyshinsky remains in custody. Although the journalist's health condition has deteriorated because he is unable to fulfill doctors' medical recommendations in prison, the trial is being delayed. We are demanding the immediate release of Kirill Vyshinsky who is being punished by the authorities for his political activities.

Russian citizens from Crimea continue to be harassed. Yelena Odnovol, head of the regional branch of the Russian organisation the Volunteers of the Victory, who was arrested on April 23 on absurd charges remains in custody.

Kiev which is hiding behind the ideological screen of a mythical Russian aggression continues to shy away from the tasks of restoring harmony in society and the state's integrity. We are confident that the Minsk Package of Measures, approved by a UN Security Council resolution, remains the only viable foundation for resolving the Ukrainian crisis. Our common task is to persuade the parties to the conflict - Kiev, Donetsk and Lugansk - to fully comply with it during direct dialogue, as required by the Minsk Agreements.

Thank you.