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Letter dated 15 February 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; Her Excellency Ms. Heidi Grau, Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Chairperson-in-Office; and His Excellency Mr. Halit Çevik, Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, the Niger, Norway, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam in connection with the video-teleconference on “Letter dated 13 April 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/264)” convened on Thursday, 11 February 2021. Statements were also delivered by His Excellency Mr. Leonid Kravchuk, Head of the Delegation of Ukraine to the Trilateral Contact Group, and by the representative of Germany.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, these briefings and statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Barbara Woodward
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo**

I last briefed the Security Council on the situation in Ukraine nearly one year ago, on 18 February 2020 (see S/PV.8726). At that time, I and many in the Council expressed cautious optimism about the renewed peace efforts in eastern Ukraine following the 9 December 2019 Normandy format summit.

The conclusions the leaders of France, Germany, the Russian Federation and Ukraine endorsed in Paris outlined a series of steps to stabilize the situation on the ground, including through confidence-building measures and a sustained ceasefire. The leaders also agreed to support efforts, both in the Normandy Four and the Trilateral Contact Group, to make progress on the key security and political provisions of the Minsk agreements.

The Trilateral Contact Group agreed to an indefinite ceasefire, which came into force on 27 July 2020. The Secretary-General welcomed this development, which was consistent with his earlier appeal for a global ceasefire. Since then, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has reported a significant decrease in civilian casualties from exchange of fire.

Another encouraging development is the release and exchange of conflict-related detainees. These are welcome developments. But, as we have seen in recent weeks, without progress on the related security and political tracks, the overall situation remains fragile. Indeed, despite numerous pledges, the sides have made little significant progress on implementing the other agreed political and security provisions. And while there is relative calm, the humanitarian situation has not improved.

On the contrary, the coronavirus-disease (COVID-19) pandemic has compounded the difficult socioeconomic conditions of civilians in conflict-affected areas, including through the further tightening of already severe restrictions on the freedom of movement across the contact line.

It has also worsened access-related issues for the United Nations, as well as shortages of medicine, equipment and medical personnel, particularly in non-government-controlled areas. Over 3.4 million people are still in need of sustained humanitarian assistance. More than half of those in need are women, and 40 per cent are elderly. The United Nations and our partners are particularly concerned about vulnerable groups living along the contact line.

Almost 10 months after the contact line was closed to contain the spread of COVID-19, the conflict-affected population continues to pay a heavy price. Pensioners residing in areas beyond Government control and registered as internally displaced persons face worsened economic conditions and added health risks. Since March 2020, they have been unable to retrieve their Government pensions.

Before the onset of COVID-19, people crossed the contact line an average of 1.2 million times each month, for social, health and other services and to maintain family ties. Currently, only two of the five entry/exit crossing points have been partially reopened. As a result, the average monthly crossings have dropped to only 36,000.

In a positive development, two centres providing a wide range of services opened on the Government-controlled side of the contact line, with more expected to open at all crossing points this year.

Despite the ceasefire, periodic shelling and small-arms fire continue to damage or destroy homes, hospitals, schools, roads and water systems. In 2020, around 60 incidents affected the supply of clean water and sanitation in eastern Ukraine. Mines and unexploded ordnance continue to claim lives.

Humanitarian access remains a significant challenge for the United Nations and other international humanitarian actors operating across the contact line. On the Government-controlled side, reinstating expedited procedures for the clearance of imported COVID-19-related humanitarian supplies is critical.

In non-Government-controlled areas, humanitarian access has been limited since 2015, and has been severely restricted since the advent of COVID-19. The United Nations Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and the team on the ground are working to resolve these issues to enable the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance to the those in need.

We urge all actors with influence to help lift undue restrictions on the freedom of movement across the contact line and secure the opening of additional exit and entry crossing points.

More than 120 humanitarian partners aim to assist 1.9 million people under the new humanitarian response plan, which prioritizes life-saving assistance, basic services and protection needs. The United Nations seeks \$168 million to provide help to all areas in need.

The United Nations is actively engaged in a range of other critical areas through the work of the United Nations country team on the ground. This includes providing medicine and personal protective equipment and sharing expertise with medical professionals dealing with the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic. Later this month, Ukraine should receive the first delivery of vaccines from the COVAX facility.

Furthermore, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine continues its critical protection, monitoring, reporting and advocacy work on both sides of the contact line. The United Nations is also working with women and youth civil-society leaders engaged in local peace and dialogue initiatives to promote national unity. Critical work with more than 1 million people internally displaced as a result of the conflict also continues. This is particularly important in the light of the increased socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable.

Guided by the Government of Ukraine-United Nations partnership framework for 2018-2022 and the sustainable peace and development agenda, the United Nations in Ukraine will continue to support efforts to strengthen social cohesion and recovery, with a focus on eastern Ukraine.

Until a sustainable political solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine is found, the situation on the ground will remain fragile. The fact that the ceasefire has largely held up and that discussions continue in the established formats is no reason for complacency. Neither is it a substitute for meaningful progress. The risk of backsliding is real if negotiations become deadlocked.

We therefore are deeply concerned by the increase in security incidents in several hotspots along the contact line in recent months. This dangerous trend needs to be quickly reversed.

On 17 February 2015, the Council endorsed, in resolution 2202 (2015), the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. As we have said before, the package of measures”, together with the Minsk protocol and the Minsk memorandum, remains the only agreed framework for a negotiated, peaceful settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

The Secretary-General has consistently expressed the strong backing of the United Nations for the lead role of the Normandy Four and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)-facilitated Trilateral Contact Group in finding a peaceful settlement to the conflict. Today I reiterate our support for these mechanisms.

The Council will hear shortly from the Special Representative in Ukraine of the OSCE's Chairperson-in-Office, Ambassador Heidi Grau, on the latest discussions in the Trilateral Contact Group, as well as from the Chief Monitor of the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission, Ambassador Halit Çevik, on the overall security situation on the ground. It is essential that we support their critical efforts. Importantly, the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission should have safe and secure access throughout Ukraine in order to fully implement its mandate.

Ukraine will mark this year the thirtieth anniversary of its independence. We reiterate our full support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

As the Secretary-General has consistently affirmed, the United Nations stands with the people of Ukraine in their search for sustainable peace.

Annex II

Briefing by the Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Chairperson-in-Office, Heidi Grau

I thank you, Madam President, for this opportunity to provide the Security Council with an update on the work of the Trilateral Contact Group.

Considerable developments have occurred since my last report to the Security Council, in February 2020 (see S/PV.8726).

Travel restrictions imposed after the onset of the coronavirus-disease pandemic forced us to hold our biweekly Trilateral Contact Group meetings by video-teleconference from late March. Such restrictions have also made it much more difficult for Ukrainians to meet relatives on the other side of the contact line.

The Trilateral Contact Group continued its efforts towards the implementation of the Minsk agreements, in general, and the 2019 Normandy summit tasks, in particular.

Where do we stand today? On the positive side, with regard to the release and exchange of conflict-related detainees following the principle “all for all”, another step was taken in April, when 34 prisoners were released from detention. However, negotiations later slowed down, with participants accusing each other of failing to honour their commitments. I very much hope that this year will allow us to move forward on this vital humanitarian issue.

On another Normandy task — the opening of two additional checkpoints along the contact line — the participants committed to the parallel opening of two checkpoints in the Luhansk region by 10 November 2020. After years of relative isolation, this step would have helped to facilitate people-to-people contacts and to provide relief, especially to elderly citizens unable to collect their pensions on Government-controlled territory. Unfortunately, three months after their scheduled opening, both checkpoints remain unilaterally closed, while negotiations on technical details are ongoing. And yet I remain optimistic that these questions can be solved and the checkpoints be opened soon.

The most important step last year was the Trilateral Contact Group agreement of 22 July on additional measures to stabilize the ceasefire. It brought long-awaited relief to people on both sides of the contact line. While we have been observing a worrisome trend towards more ceasefire violations in recent weeks, we must acknowledge that the number of ceasefire violations observed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission is still significantly lower than in the first half of last year.

Not enough progress has been achieved with regard to disengagement and demining. While participants identified 19 new demining areas and four disengagement zones in the course of last summer, implementation was made conditional on indirectly related political issues by some participants of the Trilateral Contact Group.

It is a source of great concern that progress on humanitarian and security-related issues fails due to political considerations. In the first months of 2020, the Political Working Group undertook considerable efforts to find common ground, intensively discussing the Ukrainian Law on Special Status and possible ways to integrate the so-called “Steinmeier formula” into this document. While this work yielded some results, all discussions in the Political Working Group stalled in August 2020 when some participants demanded that Ukraine’s Parliament repeal

a resolution on local elections before discussion could continue. In an attempt to overcome that stalemate, participants convened at the end of October to elaborate a concrete time-bound action plan for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. This is a very challenging task. Regrettably, this discussion in the Trilateral Contact Group has so far been a dead end. I am grateful to see the involvement of the political advisers of the Normandy Four, actively searching for ways out of the impasse.

While the Normandy Four leaders did not assign any specific task to the Working Group on Economic Affairs, the Group continued its indispensable efforts on a variety of issues, such as the maintenance of vital infrastructure, environmental threats and pension payments. This work directly impacts people's daily lives and well-being on both sides of the contact line.

In conclusion, let me sum up my remarks as follows. The past year brought a radical reduction of ceasefire violations. But latest tendencies have shown that it will be difficult to maintain the relative calm on the front line if we remain blocked on humanitarian and political issues. Therefore, it is high time all sides showed commitment and responsibility. The mediating team of the OSCE, for its part, will do whatever it can to move forward on substance.

Annex III

Statement by the Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission, Halit Çevik,

I thank you, Madam President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council.

From my vantage point as the Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and as Coordinator of the Working Group on Security Issues in the Trilateral Contact Group, I will provide an update on the security situation in eastern Ukraine, recent developments concerning the implementation of the Minsk agreements, and the impact of the conflict on civilians.

I believe we are seeing a window of opportunity for the sides to find a way towards lasting de-escalation, but we also see that it is narrowing. I further note with regret that the freedom of movement of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, enshrined in the mandate given to us by the 57 participating States of the OSCE, continues to be impeded.

While the overall security situation along the contact line remains volatile, the agreement of 22 July 2020 on additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire within the Trilateral Contact Group was followed by a substantial decrease in the level of armed violence. After the introduction of these measures in late July, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission has observed the longest-lasting reduction in violence since it began systematically recording ceasefire violations. This positive outcome was a demonstration of political will on the ground.

However, as with previous commitments and although it was within a commitment, adherence has frayed over time. On average, only 19 ceasefire violations were recorded daily from August to October last year, but since November that number has been gradually increasing.

The average daily number of ceasefire violations recorded by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in 2021 currently stands at around 87, which is still below the daily average of 594 ceasefire violations in the months before the July agreement; but as compared to the summer months the average increased significantly.

Meanwhile, other violations continue, despite commitments from the sides. Newly built trench extensions and improvements to military structures have been observed on both sides of the contact line, in contravention of the 22 July agreement. The SMM also continues to observe the presence of heavy weapons and military and military-type positions in residential areas, putting civilians in harm's way.

In summer 2020, the working group on security issues saw a period of progress that led to broad agreement on a range of important security-related conclusions from the Normandy Four summit, held in December 2019 in Paris.

In particular, an agreement in principle was reached on demining areas and an updated mine action plan; four new disengagement areas were identified; and certain progress was made on a draft addendum that would clarify several aspects of the framework decision on disengagement.

Agreement on the additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire and the decrease in armed violence that followed their adoption in July also provided an opportunity for constructive dialogue.

However, an important constraint has emerged, since the sides were not able to agree on a joint coordination mechanism to follow up and investigate alleged

breaches of the additional measures, with a view both to de-escalation and addressing impunity. That mechanism could serve as an important confidence-building measure, which is so far lacking on the ground.

I regret to say that discussions in the working group on that issue have reached an impasse, as negotiating positions have hardened over time.

Despite unanimous calls within the working group to take action against impunity, the sides have yet to show their commitment to that principle by taking action on facts of violations confirmed by SMM reports. Such actions would be an important first step toward accountability as part of the implementation of the July additional measures. Moreover, they would help reverse the erosion of political will that has led to an impasse in the working group and could prevent any further deterioration of the situation along the contact line.

According to information corroborated by the SMM, 24 civilians were killed and 107 injured in connection with the conflict in 2020. Eight were killed and 32 injured after the additional measures had taken effect.

While 64 civilian casualties were caused by small-arms fire or shelling with heavy weapons last year, I note that all but three took place before the introduction of the additional measures in late July. That is a powerful demonstration of how sustained ceasefires can save civilian lives and improve security conditions in communities that have already endured years of conflict — seven years in this case.

And yet, mines, unexploded ordnance (UXO) and other explosive devices continued to take a heavy toll on the lives of civilians. Such objects caused 16 deaths and 51 injuries in 2020, with men and boys most affected. It is a testament to the continuous threat faced by civilians that those objects caused 92 per cent of civilian casualties occurring after the July measures took effect.

Bearing in mind the suffering that mines and UXOs inflict on civilians even when the shelling stops, it is crucial that the sides implement their commitments to conduct mine action, including humanitarian demining.

The emergence of the coronavirus pandemic last year has made life even more difficult for civilians living on both sides of the contact line. Since March 2020, civilians have been able to cross the contact line between Government- and non-Government-controlled areas of Ukraine at only two of the five official crossing points. Only one of those is accessible on a daily basis, and there was a lockdown for approximately three months during the first phase of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

Despite the agreement in principle reached in the Trilateral Contact Group last summer to open new crossings at Zolote and Shchastia, civilians cannot use those locations. The SMM has observed that the Zolote and Shchastia entry-exit checkpoints have been operational since 10 November in Government-controlled areas, but corresponding checkpoints in non-Government-controlled areas are not.

The ability of civilians to use those crossing points would alleviate considerable hardship, facilitate humanitarian crossings and enable people-to-people contacts, including dialogue initiatives. Between March and December 2020, the number of crossings recorded by the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine dropped by more than 92 per cent compared with last year, a development that threatens to separate people in the long term. During that period, there were 903,000 crossings. The corresponding number for the previous comparable period was 11.99 million.

It is against that background that it is even more lamentable that the sides have not been able to agree on the opening of two new crossing points in the Luhansk region. Existing and new crossing points need to open as soon as possible.

During these challenging times, it is also all the more important that the critical infrastructure that civilians rely on to meet their basic needs remain operational, unaffected and protected from violence.

The SMM continues to facilitate dialogue between the sides and to monitor localized ceasefires to allow for the repair and maintenance of critical infrastructure. Last year, such activities facilitated repairs to nearly 120 gas, water and electricity infrastructure objects, benefiting 6 million civilians.

Unfortunately, the Mission continues to observe ceasefire violations in close proximity to several critical infrastructure sites. Of particular concern is the situation near the Donetsk filtration station, which supplies water to nearly 400,000 people on both sides of the contact line. The SMM continues to record ceasefire violations within a 5-kilometre radius of the filtration station on a near-daily basis.

Even more concerning is the fact that the SMM regularly observes shooting during scheduled shift changes of workers that are known to the sides, despite the specific security guarantees issued by the sides to enable the functioning and maintenance of the facility. Although the SMM regularly reports on those ceasefire violations, we have not seen a cessation of such occurrences.

Despite the operational challenges posed by the pandemic, the SMM continues to maintain a robust presence throughout Ukraine and to provide objective and impartial information about the situation on the ground through its monitoring and reporting.

In accordance with its mandate, the SMM also continues to monitor and report on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms on a daily basis.

Freedom of movement, which is enshrined in the Mission's mandate and the Minsk agreements, is essential for the SMM to serve as the eyes and ears of the international community in Ukraine. Yet despite the commitments undertaken by the sides to ensure the SMM's unrestricted freedom of movement, the Mission remains hampered by persistent obstructions, particularly in areas outside Government control.

The disparity is remarkable. More than 95 per cent of all freedom-of-movement restrictions experienced by the SMM in 2020 took place in non-Government-controlled areas. A substantial part — 46 per cent — of those violations took place in the southern part of Donetsk region and in areas close to the uncontrolled border with the Russian Federation.

Attempts to restrict SMM use of technical monitoring assets have also continued throughout the past year, on both sides of the contact line. In 2020, SMM unmanned aerial vehicles were targeted by gunfire on 70 occasions and were subjected to GPS signal interference 700 times.

Impediments are unacceptable in any circumstance. Yet in the current epidemiological context, in which the SMM relies on technical assets to offset temporary reductions in the availability of ground patrols, they have an especially pernicious effect on the Mission's continued operations.

The year 2020 was rife with unforeseen challenges, yet productive dialogue at the negotiating table has led to a period of stability and relative calm along the contact line. That is once again a demonstration of the fact that if there is political will and it is reflected on the ground, the situation on the ground can improve, particularly for civilians affected by conflict.

At a time when heightened tensions on the ground are threatening the progress already achieved, it is imperative for the signatories of the Minsk agreements to

adhere to their commitments and uphold the additional measures they agreed to last July.

Political progress and reduced violence reinforce each other. The window of opportunity for further political progress that opened last summer must remain open for the ceasefire to be sustained, and vice versa.

In parallel, systematic violations of the SMM's freedom of movement should come to an end. The Mission faces a narrow corridor in which to carry out its mandate due to those constant impediments.

Should that trend continue, the Mission will be increasingly constrained in its ability to monitor the situation on the ground and to report objective and corroborated information, which otherwise could support renewed efforts at the negotiating table to maintain the ceasefire.

In that regard, I would like to express our appreciation to the Council for its active interest and support, which contributes to the Mission's continued efforts to reduce tensions and foster peace, stability and security.

I take this opportunity to also express my thanks for the close cooperation that the SMM enjoys with the United Nations in Ukraine, both in Kyiv and in the field, and I thank the Special Representative, Ambassador Grau, for her leadership and her tireless efforts to facilitate a diplomatic resolution to the crisis in and around Ukraine.

Annex IV**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Geng Shuang**

[Original: Chinese]

I thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; Her Excellency Ms. Heidi Grau, Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairperson-in-Office; and His Excellency Mr. Halit Çevik, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, for their briefings.

Signed in February 2015 and endorsed by the Security Council, the Minsk II agreements have played a vital role in the political mediation of the Ukrainian crisis. Tomorrow will mark the sixth anniversary of the signing of the agreements. Regrettably, many provisions thereof have yet to be implemented, and there has been no fundamental progress in the political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis.

China calls on all parties concerned to implement the agreement in earnest, remain committed to the direction of the political settlement, seek a comprehensive solution to the crisis through dialogue and consultations, promote peace, stability and development in Ukraine, strive for a harmonious relationship among all ethnic groups in Ukraine and promote peaceful coexistence between Ukraine and the countries of the region.

China has consistently held an objective and impartial stance on the Ukrainian crisis. We respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, including Ukraine. We oppose any external interference in Ukraine's internal affairs. We have always believed that military solutions offer no way out. Dialogue and negotiation are the only way to resolve a crisis. China will continue to play a constructive role in the political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis.

Annex V**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Ambassador Sven Jürgenson**

I am grateful to Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her important and comprehensive briefing. I also thank the Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairperson-in-Office, Ms. Heidi Grau, as well as OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) Chief Monitor Mr. Halit Çevik for their updates on the activities on the ground. We fully support the tireless efforts made within the Trilateral Contact Group.

Estonia reaffirms its strong support for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, including territorial waters. We condemn the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol and the occupation of certain territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.

Unfortunately, Russia has neither acknowledged nor reversed its actions. On the contrary, for the seventh year in a row the Russian Federation has continued blatantly to violate the fundamental principles of international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, as well as a number of bilateral and multilateral agreements and commitments, including the Helsinki Final Act and the Budapest Memorandum. Therefore, Russia's actions are not only a European concern but a global one, as they pose threats to international peace and security.

We deeply regret the fact that the Russian Federation keeps violating the Minsk agreements and the conclusions of the Paris Summit, particularly regarding the withdrawal of heavy weapon; 91 per cent of all violations of the withdrawal of heavy weapons have been recorded in non-Government-controlled areas. Even during the coronavirus disease pandemic, when the humanitarian situation has been severe, ceasefire violations have been regularly recorded, and their number has even increased since November.

Since the beginning of the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, more than 30,000 people have been injured and over 13,000 killed, including 298 passengers on flight MH-17. The BUK missile system utilized to bring down flight MH-17 belonged to the armed forces of the Russian Federation, according to the independent and impartial joint investigation team. That was a heinous crime that yet again constitutes a grave breach of international law and proves that Russia's actions are of serious global concern.

We support the efforts made by the OSCE and Trilateral Contact Group to facilitate the implementation of the Minsk agreements. We commend Ukraine's political will and constructive approach to finding ways to achieve a solution to the conflict. However, security remains the basic element of de-escalation and a lasting solution. A 400-kilometre-long uncontrolled border between Ukraine and Russia is a gateway for a free flow of Russian weaponry and military personnel that only adds to the tense and fragile situation in Donbas.

Therefore, we once again underline Russia's responsibility and call on the Russian Federation, as a party to the conflict, to fully implement its commitments undertaken under the Minsk agreements, including those entered into at the Normandy summit held in Paris in 2019.

We also urge the Russian Federation to immediately stop fuelling the conflict by providing financial and military support to the armed formations that it backs, and we remain deeply concerned about the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in the non-Government-controlled areas of Ukraine.

We support the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission's valuable work. We are concerned that the SMM's freedom of movement has been restricted, despite the fact that Russia, as a signatory to the Minsk agreements, has agreed on the need to ensure the SMM safe and secure access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea.

International human rights law also continues to be severely violated in the annexed and occupied areas. Violations are targeted at persons belonging to any minority, group or organization that dissents from the views of the Government of the Russian Federation. Deprivation of civil and property rights through forced passportization and conscription are violations of international law and run counter to the spirit of the Minsk agreements. Such violations must stop immediately. All persons detained illegally must be released and international human rights monitoring mechanisms and non-governmental organizations given access to the annexed and occupied territories.

Finally, we reiterate our call on Russia to abide by international law and to uphold its international commitments.

Annex VI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: French]

I thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairperson-in-Office and the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine for their briefings.

After seven years of hostilities, we cannot accept the continuation of this conflict while millions of women and men still suffer the consequences of the war. That is why France, together with Germany, remains fully mobilized within the Normandy format in order to finally reach a just and lasting settlement, in line with the last summit of Heads of State and Government, held in Paris on 9 December 2019.

First, we welcome the progress made since that summit, particularly the prisoner exchange. We welcome the reduction in violence since the parties renewed their commitment to the ceasefire in July, and we express our concern about the recent spike in violations. France regrets that the implementation of essential measures for the populations, such as demining and the opening of new crossing points, remains blocked in the Trilateral Contact Group because of the intransigence of the de facto authorities, with the support of Russia.

Secondly, we condemn in the strongest terms all impediments and restrictions of movement to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, as well as any action that undermines its security. The coronavirus disease pandemic cannot be used as a legitimate pretext to prevent the implementation of its mandate, especially in the areas that are not controlled by the Ukrainian Government.

Thirdly, we condemn the obstruction of the work of humanitarian actors. In eastern Ukraine, 3.4 million people continue to be in need of assistance. The pandemic has only made them more vulnerable. Respect for international humanitarian law is an obligation that applies to all. We are also concerned about human rights violations and abuses, as reported by the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, under the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The perpetrators of those violations must be prosecuted and tried for their crimes.

Lastly, I want to say that we do not accept Russia's rhetoric, which consists of blaming Ukraine alone for the blockades and making unfounded accusations against France and Germany, as the Russian Permanent Representative just did. Do I need to remind him of Russia's responsibility in this conflict, which has caused more than 13,000 deaths and 30,000 wounded since 2014?

Russia has clearly accepted its binding responsibility towards the peaceful settlement of the conflict and the implementation of the Minsk agreements. It is part of the Trilateral Contact Group, with Ukraine and the OSCE, as well as the Normandy format. We call upon Russia to assume its responsibilities and exert greater influence on the de facto representatives of the areas not controlled by the Ukrainian Government.

We reiterate our appeal to the Russian and Ukrainian sides to make progress in the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. Beyond immediate measures, that also means progress in the implementation of the political dimension of those agreements as well as on the definition of the political and security conditions for

the organization of local elections, as agreed by the Heads of State and Government at the Normandy summit in Paris.

France and Germany are firmly committed to the realization of a just and lasting peace and the restoration of full Ukrainian sovereignty over Donbas.

Annex VII

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, Nagaraj Naidu Kakanur

We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo, Special Representative Grau and Chief Monitor Çevik for their useful briefings on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements, endorsed unanimously in resolution 2202 (2015).

The peaceful settlement of disputes in a manner that ensures international peace, security and justice forms the very foundation of international law. Peace is at the very heart of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Moreover, Article 33 provides Member States a number of alternatives to choose from to resolve their disputes.

When parties to a dispute come to mutually negotiated agreements, such agreements even take precedence over resolutions adopted by the Security Council, since those agreements are not externally imposed but are mutually agreed between the parties concerned, and therefore have every chance of success.

We believe that the Minsk agreements provide a basis for a negotiated and peaceful settlement of the situation in eastern Ukraine. We also believe that meetings under the Normandy format will further facilitate the resolution of the issues related to the implementation of the provisions of the Minsk agreements, including its key security and political aspects.

India welcomes all efforts aimed at reducing tension in the region and hopes that all sides will constructively work together to find political and diplomatic solutions to the issue.

Annex VIII

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason

I would like to thank Under Secretary-General DiCarlo, Ambassador Grau and Ambassador Çevik for their helpful and informative briefings today.

This is the first opportunity we have had to address these issues since we joined the Security Council, so I want to underline from the outset that Ireland is a strong and consistent supporter of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The full implementation of the Minsk agreements and the related conflict-resolution efforts in the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group are important priorities for us.

A number of commitments made under the Minsk agreements are still outstanding. We therefore call on the sides to fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full. We commend the tireless efforts of Ambassadors Grau and Çevik in the Trilateral Contact Group. We see the July 2020 additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire as a welcome breakthrough that has actually led to an improvement in the security situation.

However, it is clear from what we just heard from the briefers this morning that the ceasefire cannot be taken for granted. The importance of establishing a functioning mechanism for investigating ceasefire violations cannot be overstated. A first positive step would be the Russian Federation's return to the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination.

After almost seven years of conflict, the humanitarian situation in Ukraine remains deeply concerning, with millions of people still requiring humanitarian assistance. Civilians, who were already suffering hardships, now compounded by the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic and a fragile economy, have seen their freedom of movement severely constrained due to what is almost the complete closure of crossing points at the line of contact. That includes individuals being cut off from family, jobs, health care and pensions, as well as thousands of people with pressing humanitarian needs, who remain unable to cross that contact line. As is too often the case in conflict situations, we know that women are disproportionately affected by these restrictions, and female-headed households often lack access to social benefits and support. We must do more to support them.

We call for an end to the indiscriminate shelling of residential areas and critical civilian infrastructure and for the parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law. Furthermore, we urge action to address the issues of mines and unexploded ordnance.

Ireland is concerned that there are continued violations of Trilateral Contact Group agreements, including the recent building and extension of trenches and the presence of heavy weapons near residential areas in the region. We are also very concerned by the reduction of access for humanitarian organizations to non-Government controlled areas.

Ireland therefore calls for the easing of movement restrictions to avoid exacerbating what is already an acute humanitarian crisis. We urge the Russian Federation to implement its commitments made at the Normandy Four summit in Paris, as well as in the Trilateral Contact Group, so that the Shchastia and Zolote entry-exit crossing points become fully operational and all closed crossing points are reopened.

Humanitarian operations in non-Government controlled areas must also be facilitated, in adherence with international humanitarian law and other international standards.

We also remain concerned about serious human rights violations and abuses linked to the conflict in eastern Ukraine, as reported by the Monitoring Mission of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

We are deeply disturbed that the freedom of movement of the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe continues to be restricted. Let me recall that all signatories to the Minsk agreements agreed on the need for the Special Monitoring Mission's safe and secure access to the entire territory of Ukraine. It is also imperative to stop the practice of small-arms fire and signal interference with the Mission's unmanned aircraft and technical assets. We underscore that those responsible for any wilful damage to the Mission's assets should be held political and financially accountable.

Finally, Ireland calls on all sides to create the necessary environment to enable the implementation of the Minsk agreements to achieve a sustainable political settlement of the conflict, and we call on the parties to act constructively within the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy format. Women on the ground are leading the way in the ongoing peacebuilding work on the front lines to facilitate dialogue between communities. Making space for those women and for civil society in the peace process will be key to enabling effective and sustainable conflict resolution.

Annex IX**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Michael K. Kiboino**

Kenya thanks Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Ms. Heidi Grau, Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairperson-in-Office, and Mr. Halit Çevik, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, for their briefings.

We welcome the encouraging developments, particularly the January meeting of the Normandy format, which held discussions concerning the implementation of the Minsk agreements, the consensus reached at the group leaders' summit in Paris in December 2019, as well as the release of conflict-related detainees. The full implementation of commitments under the Minsk agreements, including the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements, remains critical to achieve a sustainable resolution of the situation.

Kenya commends the OSCE's efforts in Ukraine to carry out its mandate by monitoring the implementation of the 2015 Minsk agreements, which were endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2202 (2015).

Kenya notes with concern the humanitarian situation in the conflict-affected areas, as the hardship resulting from the protracted conflict has been compounded by the coronavirus disease pandemic, including related response measures such as the months-long closure of crossing points. We call for the urgent de-escalation of tensions and the relaxation of virus-related restrictions in order to create a conducive environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those most in need, including elderly citizens, women, children and persons living with disabilities.

At the same time, we urge all relevant actors to facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need of assistance, in accordance with humanitarian principles, and to allow international actors to fulfil their mandates effectively.

In conclusion, we encourage all parties to intensify diplomatic efforts and focus on achieving an inclusive, sustainable and peaceful solution based on cooperation and dialogue, within the Normandy format, which remains the most promising path to long-term peace and stability.

Annex X**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez**

[Original: Spanish]

I thank Under-Secretary DiCarlo, Ambassador Grau and Ambassador Çevik for their briefings.

I must say that we have been following closely the progress in the situation in Ukraine and the implementation of the Minsk agreements. We welcome the entry into force of additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire. However, we regret that there has been no significant progress in the political process.

We welcome the efforts of the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy Four summit to stabilize the situation in the zone of conflict, implement the provisions of the Minsk agreements and make progress in talks on additional buffer zones. We encourage the parties to continue to support these processes.

This package remains the agreed framework for a comprehensive, negotiated and peaceful settlement of the conflict. In that regard, we reaffirm the importance of complying with the provisions of resolution 2202 (2015). We also believe it is essential that the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has full and secure access in order enable it to fully carry out its mandate.

Sustained political will is required from all parties to preserve the achievements made and prevent possible setbacks that could even lead to a resurgence of violence. We believe that there is no military solution to the crisis and that diplomatic and political efforts must be intensified to reach a solution.

Mexico reiterates the need to respect the unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine, in accordance with international law, especially the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, we also recall General Assembly resolution 68/262.

The repercussions of the conflict in Ukraine, now entering its seventh year, affect the civilian population most of all. Mexico expresses its concern that 3.4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. Special attention should be given to vulnerable groups, the elderly and people with disabilities, who represent, as we have heard, about 40 per cent of the affected population. This is the highest percentage in the world for these demographic groups in a humanitarian crisis.

That is why we are closely monitoring the impact the restriction of movement along the line of contact has on them, and we reiterate the importance of respecting international humanitarian law. It is a priority to guarantee the safe passage of vulnerable groups with urgent humanitarian needs, as well as access for humanitarian personnel so they can distribute aid across the line of contact, taking into consideration, above all, the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

Mexico calls on the parties to comply with the agreed commitments with respect to landmines, unexploded ordnance and other explosive devices. There are more than 2 million people living in mine-contaminated areas. The impact of these mines and other explosive devices on the civilian population, and especially on children, is a matter of concern. Likewise, gender equity and the participation of young people in all stages of the peace process must be guaranteed.

Mexico favours sustainable peace as a guiding principle in the comprehensive management and resolution of conflicts. It therefore hopes that efforts between

the parties will be redoubled, as well as efforts aimed at making progress in the implementation of the set of measures that will unblock the political impasse in the conflict. Otherwise, there is a risk that only responses that address the problem in a partial manner will continue to be provided when, in reality, the issue requires a comprehensive solution.

Annex XI**Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Niger to the United Nations**

[Original: French]

I thank Ms. Heidi Grau, Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and Mr. Halit Çevik, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, for their excellent briefings.

In 2019, the summit held in Paris under the so-called Normandy format, whose agreed conclusions provided for measures to stabilize the situation in the conflict zone and implement the political clauses of the Minsk agreements, gave rise to hopes of positive developments in the relaunch of the peace process in Ukraine. Today the prevailing situation in Ukraine is due no doubt to the lack of significant progress in the implementation of the summit conclusions and resolution 2202 (2015). Indeed, the lack of a political solution to the Ukrainian crisis continues to create uncertainty about the future of the people living along the line of contact, as evidenced by the risk of disruption in the provision of basic services and the rise in unemployment. In addition, increased fighting, the presence of landmines and explosive devices and the use of heavy weapons are terrorizing the civilian population, particularly in areas where fighting is more intense.

In this context, it is necessary for the various actors to inject a new dynamic into the peace process, in particular by creating conditions conducive to the full and effective implementation of the political and security clauses of the Minsk agreements. The deleterious security climate in conflict-affected areas continues to bear upon the lives of 3.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection services and of 1.4 million internally displaced persons. To better respond to this humanitarian challenge, we urge the parties to implement the civil-military mechanism to provide security guarantees and facilitate humanitarian notifications for the safe passage of humanitarian goods and personnel.

In conclusion, the Niger calls for the intensification of efforts within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group to promote a peaceful and lasting settlement of the conflict in Ukraine.

Annex XII**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Trine Heimerback**

I thank the briefers for their briefings.

At the outset, allow me to reiterate Norway's strong support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, including the Crimean peninsula and the adjoining territorial waters.

Norway condemns Russia's aggression against Ukraine and remains deeply concerned by the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in areas held by Russian-backed armed formations in eastern Ukraine. We urge Russia to stop fuelling the conflict by ceasing immediately to provide financial and military support to the armed formations. Furthermore, we condemn Russia's illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and call on Russia to reverse this act. We also call on Russia to discontinue the simplified passport application procedure for residents in eastern Ukraine, which further undermines Ukraine's sovereignty.

The conflict in eastern Ukraine must be resolved by peaceful means. We strongly support the negotiation efforts under the so-called Normandy format and of the Trilateral Contact Group. Norway calls on all parties to uphold their commitments in order to consolidate the ceasefire and engage constructively towards resolving the conflict. And as we all know, women are key to peace. We call on all parties to ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of peacebuilding.

The sharp reduction in ceasefire violations observed by the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe since the strengthened ceasefire entered into force on 27 July has been a major achievement. Norway remains concerned by unmet humanitarian needs in the non-Government-controlled territories. We call on the parties to ensure safe and unrestricted humanitarian access to the conflict-affected population in line with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

For the majority of the past year, the people in the conflict-affected areas have faced severe restrictions at crossing points along the line of contact, which has reduced their access to necessary services. Children living in the conflict zone remain particularly vulnerable. In this respect, Norway urges all parties to implement the Safe Schools Declaration. Furthermore, landmines, unexploded ordnance and other explosive devices continue to pose a grave threat to civilians. We call on all parties to refrain from laying landmines and contribute to mine clearance.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is frequently used to justify restrictions on the SMM's freedom of movement. The SMM has implemented measures to protect its members and the population from COVID-19. We urge all parties to provide the SMM unrestricted access to all parts of Ukraine's territory, in accordance with its mandate. We are further concerned by the United Nations human rights monitoring mission's reports of serious human rights violations and abuses in eastern Ukraine. We call on Russia to facilitate full and unrestricted access to the whole of Ukraine for international human rights monitoring bodies.

Let me conclude by reiterating Norway's support for the negotiations in the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group efforts aimed at facilitating the implementation of the Minsk agreements. We commend the political will and constructive approach shown by Ukraine, and we urge Russia to reciprocate by implementing the provisions to which it has committed.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

We thank Ms. DiCarlo, Ms. Grau and Mr. Çevik for their briefings. We welcome the participation of Mr. Leonid Kravchuk, the first President of independent Ukraine and the representative of his country at the Trilateral Contact Group, in today's video-teleconference. We also welcome the participation of Germany, a member of the Normandy quartet. I cannot see German representative Christoph Heusgen on the screen, but I am sure he is here with us. I welcome him back.

Tomorrow will mark six years since the adoption of the package of measures for the Implementation of the Minsk agreements on a settlement in Ukraine. It is well known that this document was signed not on the first day of the internal conflict that flared up after the notorious Maidan events, but after nine months of tense work and uneasy concessions that Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk had to make. Those six years have given no answer to the following two important questions. How exactly is Ukraine going to resolve the conflict peacefully? What is Kyiv's vision for the future special status of Donbas within Ukraine? Indeed, all prospects for a settlement depend directly on answers to these two questions, because once Kyiv started to use force, in 2014, and the Ukrainian military began to fire on residential areas, the people of Donbas ceased to feel any connection to Ukraine.

We regularly draw attention to this situation because, in 2015, the Security Council efficiently endorsed the hard-won Minsk compromise by adopting resolution 2202 (2015), thereby incorporating the package of measures into international law. The Trilateral Contact Group was supposed to become a unique platform for direct dialogue among the three Ukrainian sides in the presence of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Russia. As Ms. DiCarlo rightly mentioned today, there is no other internationally recognized format of settlement for the Maidan-provoked internal conflict in Ukraine.

At the same time, Kyiv and our Western partners are presenting our legitimate and understandable wish to draw attention to the need for Ukraine to implement the Minsk package of measures as "Russian propaganda" and "spreading fake information". I am unfortunately certain that we will hear similar accusations today, as well as mantras that it is Russia that has allegedly failed to implement the Minsk agreements.

I would like to take advantage of Ms. Grau's presence at today's meeting to kindly ask her to give a direct answer to the following questions. Is there any mention of Russia in the text of the Minsk package of measures apart from the signature of our representative on the document alongside that of the OSCE representative? Could Ms. Grau tell us what obligations are laid upon Russia by the agreements? It would be good for the new members of the Council who have not yet had the opportunity to dig into the Ukraine case to hear her answer.

I would also like to take this opportunity to ask the briefers to give direct, non-evasive answers to our questions regarding Ukraine's alleged implementation of the Minsk package, which our Western and Ukrainian colleagues will be telling us about. Has Ukraine ensured pardon and amnesty by enacting the law prohibiting the prosecution and punishment of persons in connection with the events that took place in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, pursuant to paragraph 5 of the Minsk package of measures? In this regard, what can one say about the fact that Kyiv has not closed criminal files even against those subject to detainee exchange and that there have been instances of second detentions? Has Ukraine reinstated control of the local sector of its banking system in the

conflict-affected area, in accordance with paragraph 8 of the Minsk package? Has there been dialogue on modalities for local elections and the future regime in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as stipulated in paragraph 4 of the Minsk package? And finally, has Ukraine carried out any constitutional reform? Has a new constitution been enacted that includes decentralization as a key element? According to paragraph 11 of the package, that should have happened by the end of 2015. Has permanent legislation been adopted with regard to the special status of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in line with measures as set out in the footnote to paragraph 11? I would remind Council members that these two steps must precede the reinstatement of full control of the State border by Ukraine.

Furthermore, I would ask Ms. Grau to tell us if the so-called Steinmeier formula, which was articulated in the Normandy format as early as October 2015 in order to help Ukraine implement paragraph 11 of the Minsk package of measures, has been incorporated in Ukrainian legislation? We would also be interested in hearing comments by the briefers on draft legislation dedicated to Kyiv reinstating control over this region, which was recently published by the Ukrainian Ministry for the Reintegration of Donbas.

The drafters of this legislation thought in strategic terms. They have figured out ways to be able to keep violating the Minsk agreements for the next 25 years. The legislation is silent as to both direct dialogue between Kyiv and Donetsk and Luhansk and about negotiating special status for Donbas with them. Instead, it contains fantasies about creating some kind of “international administration” and holding elections only two years thereafter. Does anyone think the people of Donbas will agree to this form of international occupation of their homeland? Most important, how does such a plan comport with provisions of resolution 2202 (2015)?

In parallel to that, we have to state that Kyiv’s desperate unwillingness to observe its obligations under the Minsk package of measures is not a secret even by Ukraine’s leadership. For example, in May and December 2020, President Zelenskyy claimed that “the Minsk agreements are needed not to settle the conflict, but to preserve sanctions against Russia”. In a January 2020 article, First Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine and Head of the Ukrainian delegation to the Trilateral Contact Group, Oleksii Reznikov, said that Kyiv was willing work to reform the Minsk agreements. He believes that the agreements are “more a political and diplomatic arrangement than an international treaty”.

Furthermore, Mr. Reznikov is convinced that the term of the agreements expired on 31 December 2015. At the same time, Mr. Reznikov wonders whether “Russia can be persuaded to accept amending the Minsk agreements or completely changing the settlement format”. He seems to forget that Russia is not the only one to support the Minsk agreements as the only basis for an internal Ukrainian settlement, the Security Council, in the presidential statement S/PRST/2018/12, dated 6 June 2018, reiterated the need for resolution 2202 (2015) and the Minsk package of measures to be strictly observed. At the same time, without batting an eye, Mr. Reznikov claims that “Ukraine has implemented almost all the agreements made at the summit held in Paris under the Normandy format”. The fact that Kyiv has thoroughly implemented not a single one of its Minsk obligations does not seem to faze him.

Instead of implementing the Minsk agreements, Kyiv keeps spinning tales of ongoing Russian aggression; Ukraine blames everything on that. Nevertheless, no one has cared to provide a shred of proof of this so-called aggression, which is actually not a surprise. Furthermore, Mr. Apakan, Ms. Grau’s predecessor, unambiguously stated at a similar meeting two years ago that the Special Monitoring Mission had not and did not establish the presence of any Russian military units in Donbas. I expect to hear Ms. Grau confirm this fact again today.

We know too well that Kyiv only pretends to be implementing the Minsk agreements. Donbas representatives shared that information with the Council at an informal Arria Formula meeting that we organized on 2 December 2020. Incidentally, the Ukrainian delegation and its Western sponsors, including Normandy format members France and Germany, avoided the event. It would be good if today we could also listen to the representatives of Donbas, since they are parties to the settlement process.

Interestingly, the members of the Normandy format, namely, France, Germany and others, do not reject direct dialogue with Ansar Allah— affiliated with the Houthis in Yemen — the Syrian opposition and the Venezuelan opposition, or unrecognized State entities in the eastern Mediterranean for that matter. However, they get nervous when it comes to initiatives aimed at direct communication between Kyiv and the real inhabitants of Donbas, as envisaged by the Minsk agreements. Is it not you who keep stressing the importance of finding political and diplomatic solutions through an inclusive dialogue? Where are your principles in this case?

We thank the delegations that did not shy away from participating in our Arria Formula event. To those who did, I must say that the actors who side with only one party to the internal Ukrainian conflict and, contrary to the established facts, indulge their sickly fantasies about the “Russian aggression” cannot be called mediators. Rather, you are accomplices in Kyiv’s crimes against the Donbas population.

In conclusion, if Ukraine wants to normalize the situation in Donbas, Kyiv needs to make every effort to ensure that the people living in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk are not afraid of returning but, on the contrary, are eager to do so. So far, as we learned from the Donbas representatives,

“Ukraine is absolutely indifferent to the people of Donbas and is interested only in territories, or it demonstrates aggressive intentions ... [T]here is already an enormous chasm between Donbas and Ukraine.”

Judge for yourselves: Ukraine’s laws and legislative initiatives in the area of language policy that have been adopted over the past six years undermine the legitimate right of people to speak their native language; besides, they restrict and cleanse the media space. The education reform is also inherently discriminatory. The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe affirms that. As recently as in September 2019, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy swore that he would not shut down any television channels or infringe upon freedom of speech. However, his recent unconstitutional decision led to the closure of three opposition television channels, which caused a surge of public discontent, even to the point of raising the question of impeachment. The reaction of our Western colleagues to that was startling. While advocating for the freedom of speech, they still collectively welcomed that step.

What about the draft law on internment or the forced resettlement of Russian citizens, which, in fact, seeks to legalize concentration camps on the territory of Ukraine? What about the initiative to introduce liability for concealing the citizenship of other States? How is it supposed to work when the people in Donbas have no opportunity to renew their Ukrainian passports?

All those initiatives directly infringe upon the rights of those living in Donbas and deprive them of any motivation to reconnect with Ukraine. Russia has nothing to do with that.

I will not even mention the widespread glorification of Nazi henchmen in Ukraine. In the run-up to the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, we circulated document S/2021/81 in the Security Council. It contains a long list of cases of the glorification of Nazi accomplices, based on

Twitter posts of the Head of the Ukrainian Jewish Committee, Eduard Dolinskyi. The scale of that cancerous tumour that has infected Ukraine is astounding. But neither the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe nor our Western partners show signs of due concern. It is blatant double standards.

Ukraine should not waste time on excuses and dubious geopolitical games, but rather start to change, ensuring due respect for human rights, the rights of ethnic and language minorities and the freedom of the media, as, incidentally, was the case in pre-Maidan Ukraine. Kyiv should focus on the faithful implementation of its obligations under the Minsk package of measures, in close coordination with Donetsk and Luhansk, rather than keep repeating and hiding behind the lies about a war with Russia. Is Ukraine ready to move towards peace and comply with its obligations? Are our Western colleagues ready to unambiguously demand that it should do so? Unfortunately, there are ever fewer signs of that. I count on your principled position today, and I hope that our Ukrainian colleague Leonid Kravchuk will give us at least some cause for optimism.

Second statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia

[Original: English]

I would like to comment on some remarks made today and some questions asked. Actually, this video-teleconference could not surprise us in any way. We know who says what about this conflict and in what way. Today Ms. Grau did not answer the question that we had asked. She said the discussion about the parties to the conflict was ongoing. But my question was not about the discussion but about whether Russia was mentioned as a party to the Minsk agreements. I can answer that if Ms. Grau was not able to. Russia is not mentioned as a party to the Minsk agreements.

I listened to the statements of my friend Christoph Heusgen with great pleasure. I truly miss him here at the Council. He mentioned the Budapest Memorandum. I said that I was ready to have separate bilateral consultations in a group of his choice to discuss the Budapest Memorandum, its history and its sponsors. That is worth a separate conversation, but I can briefly cover it to satisfy curiosity as to our position. When we commented on it at the time, we said that, under the Budapest Memorandum, Russia was not obliged to force a part of Ukraine to stay within it against the will of the local population and that the provisions of the Budapest Memorandum did not cover circumstances that resulted from internal political or socioeconomic factors. But let us put the Budapest Memorandum aside for the time being.

Mr. Heusgen played with notions, speculating who had been occupied by whom. Was it Russia that had occupied Ukraine or, Christoph would sarcastically ask, was it Ukraine that had occupied Russia? There is a simple answer to that: Ukraine occupied Ukraine, and it is waging war on its own territory.

I listened carefully to Mr. Kravchuk, Ukraine's representative to the Trilateral Contact Group. By the way, he was announced for this meeting as Ukraine's envoy to the Contact Group rather than just the representative of Ukraine. That raises a legitimate question: where are the other representatives to the Trilateral Contact Group, including the representatives of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk?

Mr. Kravchuk spoke a great deal about Ukraine's efforts to implement the Minsk agreements and comply with the decisions of the Normandy summit. In words it sounds as if Ukraine is actively committed to implementing the agreements. He mentioned that Ukraine put forward a proposal, a road map, for the implementation

of the Minsk agreements. Unfortunately, what he forgot to mention is that three quarters of that road map contradict the Minsk agreements that Ukraine allegedly abides by.

To my regret, I did not hear answers to questions that we had asked in our statement: how to assess the claims of Ukrainian officials regarding the Minsk agreements? How to assess what Mr. Kravchuk said in numerous interviews that he recently gave? He is an experienced and respected person, and it feels rather awkward to me to cite what he said regarding the Minsk agreements, the people of Donbas and what he thinks should happen in that area.

You said Ukraine was ready to demine a location at the contact line, mentioning that the Russian side refused to demine the territory on its side. Well, Russia takes part in mine action in many places: Syria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh. We are ready to help should Ukrainian authorities ask us to. But we cannot demine anything on a territory where we are not present, which fact Mr. Çevik confirmed today yet again.

Speaking of Mr. Çevik's comments, I heard him address the death toll among civilians. But that is not the only figure cited today. I think it was the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom who said that 3,500 civilians had fallen victim to the conflict since its beginning. I would like to ask Mr. Çevik to elaborate on this statistic and share the percentage ratio of how many civilians have died on each side.

I did not quite understand the question of my French colleague as to the elections-related obligations resulting from the December 2019 summit that Russia had not implemented. As far as I understand, these agreements reiterated the formula of the Minsk Agreements and mentioned the "Steinmeier formula". So it is we who call on Ukraine to comply with these provisions.

I could say a lot more, but I am not sure the format of this meeting would allow us to do so. Let me just reiterate how important it is to continue addressing this issue in the Security Council. As for those Council members who keep repeating memorized phrases about what Russia must do to end the conflict, we will keep making the following point to them. Their mediation will be successful only once they start to work seriously and insistently with the Ukrainian side to have it implement the Minsk obligations.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Inga Rhonda King**

We welcome our briefers today and thank them for their presentations.

We begin by expressing our concern that the conflict in eastern Ukraine, especially in the Donbas region, has continued for almost seven years. Despite some positive progress in 2019, such as the swapping of prisoners and peace talks, the ongoing crisis continues to cause suffering to the civilian population, including through displacement, attacks on schools and hospitals and loss of human life. A cessation of hostilities is essential for peace and security, and we encourage the parties to adhere to the ceasefire agreements, which is necessary for reaching a sustainable solution.

We recognize the steps taken in 2020 by the Trilateral Contact Group in Ukraine to reach a new ceasefire agreement on measures to strengthen the ceasefire regime along the front line in Donbas. We welcome the continued work of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine in facilitating and monitoring localized ceasefires and enabling repairs and maintenance of civilian infrastructures.

We emphasize our support for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, as it remains the basis for a political solution to the conflict in Donbas. We hope that all parties will recommit to the peace process and fully implement all of the measures agreed in the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group in order to achieve immediate progress and lasting peace.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reaffirms its full support to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine in their efforts to continue encouraging all parties to fulfil their obligations under all agreements. We also underscore the importance of ensuring safe and unimpeded access to monitors.

In conclusion, we re-emphasize the need for full implementation of the Minsk agreements and respect for international law, including international humanitarian law.

Annex XV**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Tunisia to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Ms. Heidi Grau and Ambassador Halit Çevik for the valuable briefing on the situation in eastern Ukraine.

Today, as we commemorate the sixth anniversary of the Minsk II agreements, which constitute the legal framework for achieving a peaceful settlement in eastern Ukraine, we hope that our meeting will actively contribute and give impetus to efforts aimed at ending this crisis.

Committed to upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, Tunisia reaffirms its firm stance, which is based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and on non-intervention in their affairs, as these principles underpin peaceful relations between States.

In that context, we affirm our support for the efforts of all parties concerned to reach a comprehensive and lasting solution to the crisis in eastern Ukraine through dialogue and negotiations, in accordance with the Minsk agreements, under the auspices of the Normandy Four and the Trilateral Contact Group, and on the basis of resolution 2202 (2015).

In that regard, we welcome the positive developments that occurred in the second half of 2020, particularly the continuation of prisoner exchanges, the establishment of new disengagement zones and the opening of new crossing points along the line of contact, as well as the relative commitment to the ceasefire since the measures to reinforce it went into effect last July, although multiple violations were not recorded. We believe that continuing to take such steps will help to bolster confidence-building measures, create conditions conducive to resolving this crisis peacefully and alleviate the suffering of the affected population.

In this context, my delegation underscores that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has a vital role to play in advancing efforts to resolve the crisis. We express our appreciation and support for the efforts of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and the continued work of the Trilateral Contact Group and its various working groups.

We once again call for the comprehensive and permanent ceasefire to be honoured, heavy weapons to be withdrawn and the Minsk agreements to be implemented fully.

In addition to the economic and social toll of the conflict, the difficult humanitarian situation in areas near the line of contact has deteriorated as the repercussions of the coronavirus disease pandemic persist. All international parties must therefore make concerted efforts to provide the necessary health care and vaccinations, especially to the most vulnerable groups in the region, and ensure safe access and effective distribution of humanitarian assistance to more than 3.4 million people in need of food and basic services, while respecting international humanitarian principles and standards, guaranteeing freedoms and protecting fundamental human rights, including the rights of people belonging to national minorities.

In conclusion, in the context of the growing challenges to international peace and security, I once again stress that it is necessary to accelerate the implementation of all the agreements that have been concluded and the outcomes of follow-up

meetings, in order to achieve a comprehensive and lasting peaceful resolution to the crisis in eastern Ukraine, and thereby bring stability and prosperity to the peoples of the region.

Annex XVI

Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Barbara Woodward

I would like to start by thanking our briefers. The United Kingdom reiterates its support for the Minsk agreements, the road map that they provide for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in eastern Ukraine and the French and German efforts through the Normandy process.

The significant reduction in violence is welcome but the ceasefire remains fragile. Russia continues to supply arms and personnel to its proxies. Russia and its proxies continue to block new entry and exit points along the line of contact and the full implementation of plans for disengagement and demining. We agree that local elections must pave the way for the special status of Donbas. Yet Russia will not support the security conditions needed to enable those elections. Russia claims that it is not a party to the conflict but it instigated, and continues to fuel, the conflict. Nearly 3,500 innocent civilians have died and 3.4 million are in need of humanitarian assistance.

We remind Russia of its obligations. It must withdraw its military personnel and weapons from the territory of Ukraine, cease its support for the armed formations that it backs and stop access restrictions and intimidation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission in areas held by its proxies. Russia's objective is to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We urge Russia to match the political will demonstrated by Ukraine so that real progress can be made.

I reiterate the United Kingdom's enduring support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and territorial waters. The Ukrainian people deserve peace. We will hold Russia to account for that.

Annex XVII**Statement by the Political Coordinator of the United States of America to the United Nations, Rodney Hunter**

I thank the briefers for their presentations today. The United States is deeply grateful for the work of regional multilateral institutions, the Security Council and our partners and allies to bring peace, prosperity and stability to Ukraine.

In 2014, Russia occupied Crimea and instigated a conflict in the Donbas region. Russia has blocked meaningful progress in diplomatic negotiations, while arming, training, funding and leading its proxy forces and supporting the self-proclaimed “authorities” on the ground. Since 2014, Russia’s actions in eastern Ukraine have led to the deaths of more than 13,000 people. Its actions have displaced 1.5 million Ukrainians and left an additional 3.4 million in need of humanitarian assistance.

Russia has stepped up its efforts to destabilize Ukraine and undermine Ukraine’s sovereignty over the past year. Russia continues to deny that it controls the conflict in eastern Ukraine and falsely presents itself as a mediator to the conflict, even though it is, in fact, the instigator.

We have witnessed Russia act disingenuously towards negotiations as well. President Putin agreed at the 2019 Normandy summit to take steps to improve the humanitarian and security situations on the ground. However, Russia subsequently sought to hinder the implementation of those very same steps at the Trilateral Contact Group, both directly and through its proxies. Russia stalled the opening of new civilian crossing points along the line of contact and blocked additional exchanges of detainees. President Putin has even refused to endorse the agreement on measures to strengthen the ceasefire that Ukraine secured through the Trilateral Contact Group last July.

Meanwhile, Russia escalated its oppression of any dissent to its brutal occupation of Crimea. The United States continues to condemn the human rights abuses taking place under Russia’s repressive occupation. We urge Russia to release the more than 100 Ukrainian political prisoners whom it is holding and to end its campaign of intimidation against Crimean Tatars and opponents of the occupation.

The United States reaffirms its unwavering commitment to Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. We will never recognize Russia’s attempted annexation of Crimea. As a result, United States sanctions on Russia in response to its aggression in eastern Ukraine and its occupation of Crimea will remain in place unless, and until, Russia reverses course. We continue to support the Minsk agreements as the way forward in eastern Ukraine. The resolution to the conflict must be a diplomatic one that respects Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We are also greatly concerned by the restrictions on access that Russia and its proxies continue to impose on humanitarian workers and the personnel of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission. That is especially troubling, as it comes at a time when vulnerable conflict-affected populations face even greater threats to their lives and livelihoods due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Russia and its proxies have used the guise of COVID-19 mitigation measures to further limit the life-saving operations of humanitarian actors, contrary to humanitarian principles and the OSCE’s mandate in Ukraine.

Russia must immediately cease its aggression in eastern Ukraine and end its occupation of Crimea. We call on Russia to withdraw its forces from Ukraine, cease its support for its proxies and other armed groups and implement all the commitments that it made under the Minsk agreements. We further call on Russia to grant and

facilitate safe, timely and unhindered access to all humanitarian personnel and OSCE and United Nations monitors throughout the Ukrainian territory that Russia controls, including parts of Donetsk, Luhansk and occupied Crimea.

The United States looks forward to continuing to support its Ukrainian partners in their efforts to uphold Ukraine's sovereignty and restore its territorial integrity. To that end, we welcome Ukraine's Crimean Platform initiative, and we hope that like-minded partners will consider joining that diplomatic effort to push back on Russia's aggression and make clear that the international community will not tolerate Russia's brutal occupation.

Annex XVIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo, Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairperson-in-Office Heidi Grau and Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission Halit Çevik for their insights on progress in implementing the Minsk agreements and on the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine.

Viet Nam reiterates its principled support for the settlement of all disputes through peaceful means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the fundamental principles of international law. In pursuing that, the legitimate interests of the parties should be taken into account. We therefore support efforts to that end, including the achievement of a lasting and peaceful solution in Ukraine through the implementation of the Minsk agreements. In that regard, I would like to highlight the following three points.

First, the signing of the Minsk agreements in 2014 and 2015 and the Normandy format meeting on 9 December 2019 were encouraging signs of efforts and commitments by the leaders to stabilize and resolve the situation in the conflict areas. We take note of the positive progress made in the implementation of the Minsk agreements, including the release and exchanges of prisoners and the ceasefire agreement reached in Minsk on 27 July 2020.

Secondly, while commitments have been made, it is regrettable that reports on the situation on the ground continue to show a concerning picture. Hostilities are ongoing on a daily basis, causing a devastating impact on the lives of civilians and the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine, including the coronavirus disease response. Such actions run counter to the Minsk agreements. With the conflict now in its seventh year, we remain concerned at its deepening impact on the lives of the population and the stability and development of Ukraine and the region. The more prolonged the conflict, the harder it will be to resolve the situation.

Thirdly, in order to create conditions conducive to seeking a peaceful settlement to the conflict, we urge the parties to refrain from further violence and hostilities, avoid damaging impacts to the population, utilize existing mechanisms and build upon recent progress. We stress the need for all parties to engage in constructive dialogue in order to resolve existing challenges, build trust and implement the agreements in order to stabilize the situation for peace and development in the region. We also call on the international community and countries to continue supporting the parties in their efforts for dialogue and the implementation of the agreements and providing humanitarian assistance to people in need.

Annex XIX**Statement by the Head of the Delegation of Ukraine to the Trilateral Contact Group, Leonid Kravchuk**

[Original: Russian]

I thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to participate in this debate on an issue of great importance to my country and, I think, to the security of Europe. I also thank the briefers and members of the Security Council who expressed support for Ukraine and provided an assessment of developments related to Russian aggression. That assessment makes it clear that the Kremlin has not decided to definitively put an end to the conflict. The aggression continues. People are dying. The suffering of civilians is intensifying.

My task today is to present first-hand information on the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Allow me to briefly review the dynamics of the situation. Ukraine is taking practical steps to resolve the conflict and overcome Russia's opposition to the negotiation process. I want to stress that many of those steps would not have been possible without the support, both bilateral and multilateral, of our partners, including at the United Nations.

As already mentioned by some members of the Council, on 9 December 2019 the leaders of the Normandy Four adopted a number of important measures to be implemented by the parties to the conflict.

The Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was also important. Ukraine was one of the first countries in the world to support it, for obvious reasons. And I ask you, Ms. DiCarlo, to convey my gratitude to the Secretary-General.

What has been done in practice?

We have been able to agree on the completion of the disengagement in three pilot sites. We have initiated four new disengagement sites.

Ukraine initiated a permanent — 24/7 — consultation format within the Trilateral Contact Group after the COVID-19 pandemic started. We know that the situation with regard to COVID-19 in the occupied territories is very difficult and that Ukrainians are suffering because of the occupying Government's failure to provide the necessary health services.

Ukraine has extended for another year — until 31 December 2021 — the law on the special status of local self-governance in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

At the initiative of the Ukrainian delegation, a plan of joint steps aimed at the implementation of the Minsk agreement was presented to the Trilateral Contact Group. That document contains practical proposals aimed at ending the conflict and is fully in line with the letter and spirit of the Minsk agreements.

In December 2019 and April 2020, we agreed on the mutual release of detainees and were able to release many of our nationals from captivity.

Ukraine has endorsed, ad referendum, the Trilateral Contact Group framework agreement on mine action, as well as the finalized demining plan for the 19 agreed areas. The Russian side refuses, under various pretexts, to complete the demining work there, as well as in the four new disengagement sites.

On the humanitarian track, two new entry-exit checkpoints, in Zolote and Shchastia in the Luhansk region, were finally opened on 10 November 2020.

Unfortunately, their functioning was interrupted from day one by the occupying Government of the Russian Federation.

Ukraine also increased the level of representation in the Trilateral Contact Group by including senior Government officials and heads of parliamentary committees, as well as prominent representatives of the public from among the internally displaced persons in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

As you can see, just a cursory listing of some of the main steps we have taken together with our partners over the past 12 months is indicative of Ukraine's concrete efforts to resolve the situation in Donbas.

Unfortunately, Russia has not reciprocated those efforts. On the contrary, the number of ceasefire violations by Russian illegal armed groups increased significantly in January and February, leading to new combat casualties among Ukrainian servicemen.

Owing to the artificial obstruction of the work of the Trilateral Contact Group on the political track, there has been no progress in the consideration of Ukraine's working proposals regarding the implementation of the political aspects of the general agreed conclusions of the Normandy Four summit in Paris on 9 December 2019. There is still no adequate response from the Russian side to our actions on other fronts. Obstruction and blocking are becoming almost the norm for the Russian delegation in the Trilateral Contact Group.

The aforementioned negotiation process is taking place against the backdrop of the harsh reality of Russia's ongoing aggression. Russia is showing disrespect for the principles and norms of international law. We see restrictions on the freedom of movement in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, as well as a lack of safe and reliable access to the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, including to the temporarily uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian border and temporarily occupied Crimea. The illegal crossing of the non-controlled segment of the border by Russian cargo and road convoys, which deliver weapons, ammunition and personnel to the temporarily occupied territory, has become a common practice.

I must say that no one is currently misled by Russia's attempts to convince the international community that there are no Russian troops, weapons or mercenaries in Ukraine. In fact, the Russian Federation has turned certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as well as Crimea, into major military outposts.

Russia continues to issue hundreds of thousands of Russian passports to Ukrainian citizens living in the occupied territories. Donbas is on the brink of an environmental disaster, and not only because of air and soil pollution and explosions of munitions and mines, but also because of radioactive emissions. I would remind you that in 1979 a nuclear explosion was carried out by the Soviet Government in the territory of the Yunkom mine, which is now in temporarily occupied Donbas. After the explosion, a radioactive cavity was formed in the mine, from which water was constantly pumped out to prevent radiation from reaching the surface and groundwater. Almost three years ago, the occupying administration stopped pumping groundwater, and radiation is already leaking into the aquifers for drinking water.

In addition, as a result of Russian aggression, the International Atomic Energy Agency has not been able to verify locations in the occupied territories where nuclear material is used since 2014. Ukraine is making concrete efforts, but so far we have not received a response from the Russian side to our respective request, which is of great concern to us.

I am convinced that while we discuss the implementation of the Minsk agreements we should also think about the future, when the conflict is, I hope, over. Together with the Security Council and the Secretariat, we need to look strategically at the future of Donbas. Let us continue our hard but much-needed work. Together we can do a lot. As Head of the Ukrainian Delegation to the Trilateral Contact Group, I am ready for close interaction every day. I invite everyone to continue constructive dialogue, and I am pleased that your Ambassadors in Ukraine are working closely to that end by providing the necessary assistance to our country.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that United Nations peacebuilding work in occupied Donbas can be a very important part of our cooperation aimed at restoring basic infrastructure, the rule of law, governance and transitional justice. I hope that reintegration will come about soon, the sooner the better. Let me assure you that Ukraine will continue to make the necessary efforts to resolve the conflict. We expect the same approach from the Russian side.

Annex XX**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, Christoph Heusgen**

Today Germany is speaking to the Council as part of the so-called Normandy format. Before I start, I would like to align myself with what my colleague and friend, French Ambassador Nicolas de Rivière, said earlier.

Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia already alluded to Germany and to our role in the Security Council. I would like to start my intervention by actually going back to one of his predecessors on the Security Council. On 19 December 1994, the then Russian Permanent Representative, Sergey Lavrov, asked the President of the Security Council to register the so-called Budapest Memorandum as a document of the Security Council.

The first paragraph reads: “[t]he Russian Federation reaffirms its commitment to respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine.” Ukraine at the time trusted the Russian commitment and gave up its nuclear arsenal, which was stationed on its soil. Twenty years later, Ukraine had to pay a very high price for the good faith it had in the Budapest Memorandum and in Russia: Russia invaded Crimea and eastern Ukraine. It was staged by Russia as an internal uprising. But we know from President Putin himself, who decorated the Russian soldiers who participated in the assault, that those indeed were Russians who invaded Crimea and eastern Ukraine. That is something we missed in the presentation today by Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia.

I also would like to recall the saddest moment in the Russian assault of Ukraine: 17 July 2014, the day of the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17, when 300 people died. At the time, the Russian military commander on the field, Mr. Igor Girkin, went public and rejoiced about the downing of the plane, which he thought was a Ukrainian plane. Mr. Girkin still lives in freedom in Russia instead of standing trial in The Hague, where the families of the victims are asking for accountability for that horrible attack on Flight MH-17. I also missed that in the statement by the Russian Ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia.

The Russian Ambassador mentioned the Minsk agreements and quoted a number of paragraphs, but he did not quote any of the first and most important paragraphs. The first paragraph is on the ceasefire. I was in Minsk. After long negotiations, the ceasefire was set for midnight on 15 February, six years ago. At that time, however, the attack of Russian soldiers in Ukraine did not stop, because the Russian militias were not able to conquer a very important logistical hub, the city of Debaltseve. Hence they continued to fight for more than two days until the Russian armed forces were able to do just that.

The second paragraph is about the withdrawing of heavy weapons. Until today, the Russian heavy weapons have not been withdrawn from the line of command and control, in violation of the Minsk agreements.

The third paragraph is about effective monitoring. That task was given to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). And we heard again that until today the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) cannot do its job. The SMM does not have free access, cannot effectively monitor what is happening on the ground and, in particular, cannot observe the Russian-Ukrainian border in the area, which is not controlled by the Ukrainian Government. Therefore, day after day, Russia can ship soldiers and armaments into Luhansk and Donetsk. In the latest SMM report, we read that 94 per cent of all incidents affecting the operability of the SMM are the responsibility of the separatists. I would like to

take this opportunity, also in the presence of Mr. Çevik, to thank the SMM for its important work on a very difficult job.

Let us go back to the Minsk agreements. Paragraph 7 is on the safe distribution of humanitarian assistance. We heard today about the difficulties that humanitarian organizations encounter when attempting to deliver support to the occupied territories. We heard a lot about the difficult circumstances of the people living in those areas.

Paragraph 10 is on the withdrawal of foreign armed formations. Until today, there are still Russian forces in eastern Ukraine. They may not have the official stamp of the Russian army, but the Russians continue to be there, and without Russia, Luhansk and Donetsk could not survive.

When listening today — and I listened very carefully to the Russian Ambassador — I always have the impression it was Ukraine that invaded Russia, and not the other way around: that Russia in fact invaded Ukraine.

Yes, there are problems in the Ukrainian Government, which have been there from the very beginning. I went to Kyiv. I talked to members of the Rada. There is not a lot of trust in Russian commitment, and one understands why. There are doubts when you look back to the non-implementation of the Budapest Memorandum. Therefore, it is not easy for the Rada to approve all the laws and regulations that are brought forward by the Government. The Rada is not the Duma, where Government decisions are basically rubber-stamped. This is democracy.

On another occasion we heard the Russian Ambassador lamenting about the fact that only Belarus and China participated in their December Arria Formula meeting on eastern Ukraine, but nobody else wanted to listen to the separatists. We were reminded again today by the former Ukrainian President that the composition of the Trilateral Contact Group — which is there to resolve the issue and to implement the Minsk agreements — is Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE. Instead of trying to give legitimacy to those puppet regimes in Luhansk and Donetsk, they should concentrate on doing their job. They should finally open Zolote and Shchastia, instead of telling fantasy stories. They should stop the restrictions on the movement of the SMM on a daily basis and stop wilfully damaging SMM property. And Russia should stop issuing Russian passports to large numbers of Ukrainian nationals. This clearly contradicts the spirit of the Minsk agreements, but is also a violation of international law.

Unfortunately, the way that Russia behaves in Ukraine is part of a pattern that we regularly see here in the Security Council, disrespect for international law and international humanitarian law. We see this in Syria with the backing of the murderous Al-Assad regime, the undermining of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the bombing of hospitals. We see it in the militias that are stationed in Libya. And we have seen the poisoning of Mr. Skripal and Mr. Navalny.

Let me end with a recent quote by Chancellor Merkel on the latest Russian move. She said, “[w]e are witnessing another facet of Russia’s detachment from the rule of law.” I hope that one day we will see a reversal of this trend.
