



# Security Council

Seventy-fifth year

**8726**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Tuesday, 18 February 2020, 3 p.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mrs. Van Vlierberge/Mr. Bogaert . . . . . (Belgium)

*Members:*

China . . . . .	Mr. Wu Haitao
Dominican Republic . . . . .	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Estonia . . . . .	Mr. Jürgenson
France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
Germany . . . . .	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia . . . . .	Mr. Syihab
Niger . . . . .	Mr. Abarry
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines . . . . .	Ms. King
South Africa . . . . .	Ms. Tshabalala
Tunisia . . . . .	Mr. Ladeb
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. Pierce
United States of America . . . . .	Ms. Norman-Chalet
Viet Nam . . . . .	Mr. Dinh

## Agenda

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)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **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)**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Sergiy Kyslytsya, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: 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.

Ms. Grau and Mr. Çevik are joining via video-conference from Kyiv.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Ms. DiCarlo.

**Ms. DiCarlo:** On 17 February, five years ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 2202 (2015), which endorsed the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Today that 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, the Trilateral Contact Group and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in finding a peaceful settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine and has called for a revitalization of those efforts.

I last briefed the Council on Ukraine on 16 July (see S/PV.8575). A number of important developments have since then given rise to hope for long-elusive progress in the implementation of the Minsk provisions, including its key security and political aspects.

Most notably, on 9 December, after a three-year hiatus, the leaders of France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine met in Paris under the so-called Normandy format. The Normandy Four meeting called for immediate measures to stabilize the situation in the conflict area, measures to implement the political provisions of the Minsk agreements and follow-up steps. The leaders committed to a full and comprehensive implementation of the ceasefire, strengthened by the implementation of all the necessary ceasefire support measures.

They also committed to supporting the development and implementation of an updated demining plan, as well as to supporting an agreement within the Trilateral Contact Group on three additional disengagement areas, with the aim of disengaging forces and equipment. They encouraged the Trilateral Contact Group to facilitate the release and exchange of conflict-related detainees and committed to supporting an agreement within the Group on new crossing points along the line of contact, based primarily on humanitarian criteria. Critically, the participants recalled that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission should have safe and secure access throughout Ukraine in order to fully implement its mandate.

The leaders in Paris further referred to the so-called special status for certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as well as the so-called Steinmeier formula, which was accepted by the sides earlier. The Secretary-General publicly welcomed the outcomes of the meeting and called on all concerned to redouble their efforts to build on recent progress towards a resolution of the conflict. He also reiterated his full support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders.

I used the opportunity of my first visit to Ukraine, from 12 to 13 December 2019, to reiterate the Secretary-General's support for the ongoing peace efforts and critical reforms in Ukraine. My interlocutors were clear in their desire to see tangible progress in the negotiations. Many of those I met stressed the need for greater involvement by women in the ongoing peace efforts. I also heard about the need to improve the humanitarian situation for ordinary people living

along the contact line and to invest greater attention and political will in enabling and strengthening various dialogue initiatives that could contribute to ensuring sustainable peace.

We are pleased that the Normandy Four summit held in Paris was followed by a large-scale exchange of prisoners and progress on discussions of additional disengagement areas. However, those initial encouraging signs remain limited and easily reversible. Today's disturbing reports of major ceasefire violations across the contact line near Zolote, including the alleged use of heavy weapons, are deeply disturbing and a stark reminder that, in the absence of sustained political will, there is a very real risk of backsliding and further violence.

Members will hear shortly from the newly appointed Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine, Ambassador Heidi Grau, on the most recent discussions in the Trilateral Contact Group, and from the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, Ambassador Halit Çevik, on the overall security situation on the ground. It is critical that we support their important efforts.

At this pivotal time, I hope the Council will encourage all stakeholders to do their utmost to ensure a sustained positive momentum in the negotiations, display the political will and flexibility to reach agreement on key steps forward and focus on the implementation of agreed commitments, including, first and foremost, the commitment to a durable ceasefire.

Despite some steps taken to mitigate its impact on civilians, the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine continues to claim lives, cause injuries, severely restrict the freedom of movement and negatively impact basic human rights, including the rights to housing, health, education and an adequate standard of living. The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has regularly reported on the human rights situation; its most recent report is dated 12 December 2019.

In 2019, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded 167 civilian casualties — 27 killed and 140 injured — of which 63 per cent were caused by shelling and small arms and light weapons fire and 35 per cent by mines and explosive remnants of war. That represents a 40 per cent decrease from 2018 figures and the lowest annual figures for the entire conflict period. While that decrease is a welcome development, we note that a permanent and

comprehensive silencing of weapons — the best way to eliminate civilian casualties — is still not within reach.

The United Nations is particularly concerned about people living along the contact line, who remain the most vulnerable. Civilians pay the highest price in the crisis. A total of 3.4 million people, including the elderly, the disabled and children, require humanitarian assistance and protection services. The conflict has transformed many families into single-headed households.

As reported by United Nations agencies, women — who lead nearly 70 per cent of households on both sides of the contact line — face particularly daunting challenges as a result of continued hostilities and volatility along the line. Many of them lack a social network, income, access to housing and opportunities for employment and professional development. Female-headed households often have no access to social benefits or psychological support.

Humanitarian access and the protection of civilians and civilian assets are everyday challenges. Water, education and health infrastructure continue to be severely impacted by the conflict, reducing access to those facilities for civilians living there. In 2019, there were 50 incidents that damaged education facilities, a 200 per cent increase over 2018, while 88 incidents targeted water infrastructure located near or on the contact line. Attacks on civilian infrastructure must stop.

The United Nations and its partners provide assistance in accordance with the universally recognized principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. As they seek to reach the most vulnerable civilians, humanitarian organizations require unimpeded and sustained access. Since 2014, the United Nations and its partners have been able to reach an estimated 1 million people per year with life-saving aid, thanks to the generous contributions of donors. However, that constitutes less than one third of the total number of people in need. Since the 2019 humanitarian response plan was severely underfunded, the 2020 plan will require \$158 million in order to reach 2 million people.

As I heard at first hand during my December visit to Ukraine, the conflict continues to exact an unacceptable humanitarian toll on the Ukrainian population. It destabilizes overall peace and security in Ukraine, but also potentially in the region as a whole. The recent positive momentum and the stated

commitment of the Normandy Four and the Trilateral Contact Group participants to address the conflict with renewed impetus and a sense of urgency need our encouragement and full support.

That must be followed by action in order to restore trust and enable tangible improvements in the precarious humanitarian situation along the contact line. The much-needed and long-awaited peace in eastern Ukraine can be achieved if there is sufficient political will, good-faith negotiations and concrete support for efforts to silence the guns.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. DiCarlo for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Grau.

**Ms. Grau**: I thank the Security Council for the invitation to brief it on our efforts to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

The work of the Trilateral Contact Group has intensified in recent months. The summit of the Normandy Four leaders held in Paris on 9 December acknowledged that new dynamism. The common agreed conclusions of the summit presented a list of follow-up measures and injected additional energy into the process. The Normandy Four leaders have agreed to meet again within four months.

Let me first speak about the security situation. Council members may have seen the joint statement issued today by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Mr. Edi Rama, and OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger, in which they express their deep concern about the surge in heavy fighting and urge all sides to exercise maximum restraint and honour their commitments. More generally, with regard to the security situation, the sides recommitted to the ceasefire on 17 July 2019 in Minsk and confirmed that decision on 18 December 2019.

The number of ceasefire violations in 2019 remained below the 2018 average. That represents relative calm, not complete silence, but it has led to fewer civilian victims.

There were about 40 per cent fewer civilian casualties in 2019 than there were the year before, and 70 per cent fewer than in 2017. This is an important positive development, but, at the same time, I have to stress that every single victim is one too many. In that

regard, I would like to draw the Council's attention to the contamination of land by mines and unexploded ordnance, which remains an acute problem that continues to cause civilian victims.

Since July 2019, disengagement of forces and hardware has finally taken place in three areas: Stanytsia Luhanska, Zolote and Petrivske. That is an important step. In Stanytsia Luhanska, the only crossing point in the Luhansk region, disengagement has allowed the reconstruction of a pedestrian bridge across the Siverskiy Donets River. Before, rain or shine, the upwards of 11,000 mostly elderly people who crossed the line per day had to walk down and up steep and slippery wooden ramps. Moreover, ambulances can now use the bridge. Ambassador Çevik will provide further details on the ceasefire and disengagement areas.

The opening of additional crossing points, as promoted by the four leaders in Paris, would be of great importance to the civilian population. Discussions on several options are now ongoing. For the people living in the Luhansk region in particular, it would be important to have additional crossing points opened, since, so far, Stanytsia Luhanska is the only open crossing point in the region.

On 29 December, an exchange of approximately 200 detainees took place. It was the first such exchange in two years. It gave new impetus to the humanitarian working group. Additional exchanges of detainees are under discussion. Looking ahead to completing the exchange of all for all, the sides are aware of the need to put in a place a mechanism to search for and identify missing persons.

Let me now present a brief look at the political dimension. On 1 October, the sides accepted the so-called Steinmeier formula, which details the sequence of steps to be taken with regard to local elections in the non-Government-controlled territories and the entry into force of the special status for those territories. On 12 December, Ukraine extended the law on special status for another year. The political working group continues to have substantial discussions on the incorporation of the Steinmeier formula into Ukrainian legislation.

The economic working group addresses issues related to the delivery of public goods vital for the population in the conflict-affected area: pensions, water, electricity and telecommunication services. Among other things, the sides have agreed on measures to maintain water supply on both sides of the contact

line. In that context, I would like to reinforce what Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo said before: attacks on civilian infrastructure are by no means acceptable and must stop.

The Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups will continue in their efforts to reach a sustainable solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. I am convinced that, with trust and political will from the sides, this is possible.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Grau for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Çevik.

**Mr. Çevik**: I thank you, Madam President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council for the first time in my capacity as Chief Monitor of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. I will provide Council members with 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.

A comprehensive ceasefire, which is the first point of the Minsk protocol, the Minsk memorandum and the package of measures, remains an essential element for progress. After the latest recommitment to the ceasefire, which the sides agreed to on 21 July 2019, the SMM recorded a significant drop in the level of violence. It lasted for 40 days, before the number of ceasefire violations reached the pre-recommitment level.

Since 1 January, the SMM has recorded another significant decrease in the average number of ceasefire violations. However, isolated spikes in violence have continued to occur. Today the SMM recorded a very serious incident in the western part of the Luhansk region, in the broader area to the east and west of Zolote, where there was a spike in the number of ceasefire violations, including over 2,300 explosions. The Mission is further analysing information gathered today, which we will include in our public reports.

As in the past, these flare ups can lead to an erosion of the earlier positive trends and increase the risk of escalation. During the summit of 9 December, the Normandy Four agreed that a full and comprehensive ceasefire needed to be implemented. The political commitment to a ceasefire, expressed at the highest level,

has yet to be translated into concrete implementation on the ground.

Since 1 January, the daily average number of ceasefire violations recorded by the SMM is around 520, which is still far too high to ensure a ceasefire regime that is manageable. Additional measures, if implemented in good faith, can help transform the situation where violations of the ceasefire become the exception. At the same time, weapons that should have been withdrawn according to the Minsk agreements continue to be used. They were also used today, during the incident I mentioned earlier.

Since the beginning of the year, the SMM has observed 647 ceasefire violations attributable to the use of artillery, including multiple-launch rocket systems, tanks and mortars. Since 1 January, the SMM has observed weapons in violation of withdrawal lines on approximately 200 occasions. The SMM reported the presence of artillery greater than 100 millimetres in calibre on 91 occasions, and multiple-launch rocket systems on 72 occasions. Not only do weapons located close to populated areas draw fire, but they — together with ammunition left in the area — pose a significant threat to the safety of civilians.

Against the backdrop that I have just laid out, we have seen in recent months a renewed momentum, engagement and important steps for the implementation of some of the commitments undertaken. The sides have disengaged forces and hardware in all three pilot areas of Stanytsia Luhanska, Zolote and Petrivske, as foreseen in the framework decision of the Trilateral Contact Group relating to disengagement of forces and hardware of September 2016.

The disengagement process has had an important positive impact in Stanytsia Luhanska, enabling much-needed repairs of the bridge. The broken pedestrian bridge was a symbol of the conflict; we all remember pictures of the elderly struggling to cross. The new bridge is now an example of what can be achieved with political will. It is also a powerful reminder that, once again, with political will, progress is possible and that this progress can have a tangible positive impact on civilians.

In the other two pilot disengagement areas of Zolote and Petrivske, forces and hardware have been withdrawn. Other important activities, including mine clearance, are ongoing. In Petrivske, an area in which SMM's access is significantly restricted, ceasefire

violations are still taking place. The situation will continue to require attention.

The summit of the Normandy Four in December agreed on a number of measures on the security track. In the working group on security issues of the Trilateral Contact Group, participants are engaging on the implementation of these measures, focusing in particular on disengagement, as a precursor to a more durable cessation of fire and demining. Discussions on the identification of three new disengagement areas are progressing, with a preliminary, overlapping interest on one specific area.

Participants also outlined proposals for disengagement in a number of other areas, with a view to completing the process by the end of March, as agreed by the Normandy Four.

On demining, one of the other commitments undertaken in the Paris Summit, proposals for an updated plan still need to be discussed in detail. Similarly, detailed discussions are still needed on the possible opening of additional entry-exit checkpoints for civilians travelling across the contact line

What lies ahead in the coming months is crucial. There is an urgency to maintaining the momentum and to meeting the deadlines set by the Normandy Four leaders. The Special Monitoring Mission is continuing to work to follow up on information concerning casualties among the civilian population.

In 2019, according to the information gathered by the Mission, shelling with heavy weapons was the major cause of civilian casualties, with 75 people injured as a result of such incidents. However, mines and other explosive objects have been the cause of the majority of the fatalities; 11 people were killed by mines or unexploded ordnance in 2019.

The Mission's presence, monitoring and reporting are crucial to provide objective and impartial information on the situation on the ground. That presence is also important to support the sides in the implementation of their commitments. Freedom of movement, which is enshrined in the Mission's mandate and the Minsk agreements, is therefore essential.

Yet the Mission is often limited by obstacles to its freedom of movement, overwhelmingly in areas outside Government control, in particular in the southern part of the Donetsk region. These daily restrictions are unacceptable and need to cease.

The key elements to address the security situation are set out in the Minsk agreements. The Normandy Four, in December, defined a number of steps that can pave the way to the full implementation of the agreements.

Time is of the essence for the resolution of the conflict, which has now entered its sixth year. The active interest and support of the Council will remain crucial.

In closing, I wish to express my appreciation for the close cooperation with United Nations agencies in Ukraine, both in Kyiv and in the field.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Çevik for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members wishing to make statements.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful for the support for our initiative to convene today's meeting on an issue that is highly relevant to European security, and we thank the briefers for their assessments. We welcome to today's meeting the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Kyslytsya. As far as we understand, we will soon be meeting here in New York more frequently, and we look forward to constructive cooperation with him.

Yesterday marked exactly five years since the adoption of resolution 2202 (2015), approving a set of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. The document has therefore become a mandatory component of international law. Unfortunately, few remember that. Thus, during a Security Council meeting on cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) that took place on 6 February (see S/PV.8715), it came to light that members of the Council with significant influence on the settlement process in Ukraine, including the parties to the Normandy Format, prefer not to recall what has been explicitly set out both in the resolution and the package of measures. They have attempted to conceal their forgetfulness by resorting to the mantra, so to speak, that the Russian Federation is failing to comply with its obligations.

We deeply regret the fact that for five years, our Western partners, which at the time supported the anti-constitutional Maidan coup d'état, with its rabid Russophobia and nationalism, did not deign to absorb the fact that the parties to the Minsk agreements are

not Russia and Ukraine but, rather, Ukraine and the Republic of Donbas.

What is even more alarming is the fact that Kyiv has of late egregiously ratcheted up its rhetoric, which casts doubt on the Minsk agreements. For example, our initiative to convene today's Security Council meeting has been called by the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry a ploy on the part of Russian diplomacy aimed at generating a parallel political reality.

Let us recall that just a year ago, on 12 February, during a similar Security Council meeting (see S/PV.8461), the permanent representative of Ukraine, Mr. Yelchenko, expressed his gratitude to the presidency of the Security Council for the opportunity to participate in a meeting on "an issue of the utmost concern to us".

Many eminent Ukrainian politicians have also joined the campaign to sabotage the Minsk agreements. They are blatantly contradicting the political will that was announced by President Zelenskyy in Paris towards a settlement. Will alone indeed is insufficient; what is necessary are concrete measures. Only in recent days we have heard from Mr. Kryvonos, Deputy Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council, that the Ukrainian forces "need to stand ready to use force to liberate the territory of Donbas".

The Defence Minister, Mr. Zagorodniuk, objected to disengagement along the entire line of contact because, allegedly, "this runs counter to the very essence of the Minsk agreements". Yet this is actually the very essence of the first paragraph of the Minsk package of measures.

The representative of Ukraine to the subgroup on political issues of the Trilateral Contact Group, Mr. Resnikov, said that Minsk agreements are at the very minimum subject to partial revision. Just yesterday, the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Avakov, said, "We are considering a step-by-step approach; on one day we will take up one area, and the next day, another one".

At the same time, the Ukrainian security forces persist in their attempts to take up the positions of militiamen in the so-called grey zones, where there should be no military personnel at all.

We proposed today's meeting specifically because for millions of residents in eastern Ukraine, whom Kyiv and its partners in this Chamber prefer not to remember,

the Minsk agreements are neither a ploy nor a parallel reality but the sole real hope for peace. Only after their implementation will Ukraine have an opportunity to rebuild the eroded trust of the people of Donbas, whom the Ukrainian authorities have demoted in an instant to second-class citizens, labelling them separatists and aliens in their own land.

We cannot but be troubled by the attempts to deliberately or unwittingly supplant the Minsk basis for a settlement with other formats, for example, the Normandy format, which, let us recall, was created specifically to support the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Therefore, we deem it important to reiterate that the efforts made under this format will be effective only if they are rooted in unconditional implementation of the package of measures and agreements reached under the Normandy format. This specific approach was endorsed in the agreed conclusions of the quartet summit held in Paris on 9 December. It is the implementation of this approach by all parties, primarily Ukraine, that will become for us a decisive factor for us in assessing the viability of a new meeting in the Normandy format.

So far as we can see, hostilities are ongoing, including today in the area near Luhansk. There is no progress on the issues of disengagement of forces and equipment, interaction on demining, permanent introduction of the Steinmeyer formula in the Ukrainian legislation; there is no willingness to agree on the disengagement of forces in new areas, and no readiness for direct dialogue with the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic.

Before our meeting, we circulated the text of the package of measures as an official document of the Security Council so that all those here present could have an opportunity to refresh their memory as to the fact that not only is Russia not mentioned there, but also that the 13 points contained therein set out a clear sequence for implementation: ceasefire, amnesty, constitutional reform, with the provision of special status to Donbas and the right to linguistic self-determination, then the holding of elections and only after that the restoration of Government control throughout the conflict zone.

Unfortunately, of the 13 points to date perhaps only two have been implemented, that is, those on the proceedings of the Contact Group in Minsk and the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission. Many of those present have themselves spoken of the devastating

plight of the residents of Donbas yet have refused to acknowledge the responsibility of Kyiv, which, in waging war against its own population, has imposed a transport, food and economic blockade against Donbas. Every day for the past five years, people have died as a result of the shelling. Are they shooting themselves? Were they the ones who started the war and marched on Kyiv?

A scenario whereby in Kyiv they propose first allowing Ukrainian soldiers into Donbas, which former civilian militias have been protecting for all these years, risking their lives every day, and then giving the Ukrainian armed forces control over the border is absolutely unacceptable to eastern Ukraine. That position must be respected, since no settlement is possible without taking the views of the residents of Donetsk and Luhansk into account.

I believe that it is time to finally understand that elections in Donbas can take place only in a climate of public trust in the electoral process. That requires specific conditions in which Kyiv cannot oppress politically those who enjoy genuine popular support — those whom all Ukrainian politicians call separatists and whose punishment they call for and those whom the residents of Donbas, in turn, consider to be their protectors, who uphold their right to life and their identity. We need guarantees of a truly inclusive political process.

We know the points that some representatives are about to make. We therefore wish to warn Council members in advance that every time they say that Russia is failing to comply with the Minsk agreements, they should remember that they are deliberately misleading their own people and the international community. Every time that they refuse to acknowledge Kyiv's responsibility and urge Kyiv to comply with its obligations towards its own people and instead wait for someone else to step in and do it, they prolong the suffering of the residents of Donbas, who, unlike them, know the truth and defend it at the cost of their own blood.

The longer they play along with Kyiv, the less the opportunity for a mutually respectful dialogue between Ukrainian citizens on both sides of the demarcation line. Yet it is precisely dialogue between belligerent parties that we all call for in all other conflicts, be it in Syria, Yemen or Libya. Only Donbas is denied that right.

We therefore hope to hear our colleagues' commitment to the Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2202 (2015) and presidential statement S/PRST/2018/12 of 6 June 2018 in support of the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. That document is part of international law and should be implemented unconditionally.

**Ms. Norman-Chalet** (United States of America): I thank the briefers for their presentations. In 2014, Russia occupied Crimea and fuelled the conflict in eastern Ukraine that has killed more than 13,000 people, displaced millions and precipitated an alarming humanitarian crisis. Russia's ongoing aggressive actions are an affront to international norms and a threat to our common security.

The position of the United States is clear: we continue to support the Minsk agreements as the way forward in eastern Ukraine. We fully back the Normandy format process. The resolution to this conflict must be a diplomatic one, and we will continue to engage with allies and partners to support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Through its actions, Ukraine has made clear its commitment to achieving a peaceful resolution of the conflict. President Zelenskyy has energized conflict diplomacy through outreach to Ukrainian citizens in eastern Ukraine, enabled improvements to humanitarian conditions on both sides of the line of contact, negotiated two prisoner exchanges and established a dialogue with President Putin that yielded the first Normandy summit since 2016.

Unfortunately, Russia has not shown a similar willingness to fulfil its commitments under the Minsk agreements. It continues to arm, train, lead and fight alongside its proxy forces in eastern Ukraine. That stands in direct contravention of Russia's commitments under the Minsk agreements, including to establish an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire. In that regard, today's attack by Russian-led forces near Zolote, which resulted in Ukrainian casualties, took place on the five-year anniversary of Russian-led forces taking the key rail hub of Debaltseve in direct contravention of the terms of the Minsk agreements reached only a week earlier. Now, as then, Russian-led forces continue to contravene commitments made by President Putin and Russian officials and to kill Ukrainians on Ukrainian territory. Instead of engaging constructively, Russia stalls and disseminates disinformation to distract attention from its central, unmistakable and unjustifiable role in fomenting this conflict. Russia



also continues its hybrid activities against Ukraine, wielding economic and political leverage.

Russia must end this conflict by withdrawing its forces from eastern Ukraine and Crimea. We call on Russia to immediately implement its security commitments under the Minsk agreements, as the parties can move forward with the Minsk political measures only once there is security on the ground. We also call on Russia to follow through with the measures outlined at the recent Normandy summit in Paris to immediately stabilize the situation in the conflict area, which include the opening of new civilian crossing points, disengaging military forces in areas of the greatest humanitarian significance and implementing ceasefire support measures.

The United States underscores its unequivocal position on Ukraine. We do not, and will not, recognize the Kremlin's purported annexation of Crimea. Our sanctions against Russia will remain in place until Ukraine regains control over its territory. In the name of international peace and security, we call on Russia to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, extending to its territorial waters. We condemn the abuses taking place under Russia's repressive occupation and call on Russia to release the more than 80 Ukrainian political prisoners it is holding and to end its campaign of intimidation against Crimean Tatars and opponents of the occupation. We will never accept anything less than the full restoration of Ukraine's control over its own territory, whether in eastern Ukraine, Crimea or its territorial waters.

**Mr. Heusgen** (Germany): Germany would like to welcome to the Council all the briefers, in particular Ms. Heidi Grau and Mr. Halit Çevik, who follow their Swiss and Turkish predecessors, Heidi Tagliavini and Ambassador Apakan, to whom I would also like to pay tribute today. I welcome the fact that Russia requested a meeting under this agenda item today, since today marks the five-year anniversary of Debaltseve. I will come back to that.

Today is a sad day for international law and for Ukraine and its people. I must briefly go back in history to recall the Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with Ukraine's Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, concluded between Russia, Ukraine and others in 1994, whereby Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons in exchange for

a guarantee by Russia of its national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Six years ago, when the Ukrainian President fled Kyiv after he refused to agree to a European Union Association Agreement and there was public unrest, there was volatility in the country. Russia took advantage of the situation. It invaded Ukraine and occupied and annexed a part of it. Among other things, a Russian Buk anti-aircraft missile was responsible for the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH-17 and the death of 283 civilians.

Five years ago, the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements was adopted in Minsk and, as my Russian colleague underlined, were then put into resolution 2202 (2015) as an annex. The Normandy format has been active since then and met again at the highest level only a few weeks ago to make sure that the situation improves. Since the Minsk agreements five years ago, the situation has stabilized to a certain degree. There has been no further Russian occupation. However, the situation is still bad, although there have been fewer civilian casualties. I agree with what Heidi Grau said earlier with regard to each and every victim of this conflict being one too many.

A couple of weeks ago (see S/PV.8714), the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Europe said that Ukraine remains the most pressing security challenge on the European continent. As highlighted in previous briefings by Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo, there has been some progress since President Zelenskyy took office and the last Normandy Four summit. The prolongation of the special status law, the repair of the Stanytsia Luhanska bridge, the exchange of detainees, the written agreement on the Steinmeier formula and additional disengagement areas and new crossing points have been agreed but still need to be implemented.

However, I want to come back to the main point made by my Russian colleague. He accused Ukraine, saying that it had not implemented the Minsk package of measures. In that connection, I would like to repeat what our American colleague just said and what I have said before, but has not sunken in — the first paragraph of the package of measures asks for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire effective 15 February at 12 a.m. On 15 February at 12 a.m., Russian forces were still actively bombarding and attacking the village of Debaltseve, which is of strategic importance. So, from the very beginning, Russia has not implemented the

Minsk agreements, and all of the challenges that the Ukrainian Government has had to face in the Rada to get all the laws implemented were related to the fact that Russia could not be trusted because it violated the first paragraph of the Minsk package of measures.

The second point of the Minsk package is the withdrawal of all heavy weapons by both sides by equal distances. What we heard today and what happened today is very regrettable. The deaths were a result of the weapons that were not withdrawn in accordance to what is set forth in the Minsk package.

The third paragraph of the Minsk package calls for ensuring effective monitoring and verification of the ceasefire regime by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We regularly look at the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (SMM) reports, and there it is clear that the restrictions of movement for the SMM are due mainly to what the separatists are doing. Donetsk and Luhansk are responsible for 90 per cent of the documented incidents where Mission monitors cannot do their job. Paragraph seven specifies the need to “ensure safe access, delivery, storage, and distribution of humanitarian assistance” and also sets forth the agreement that the last Normandy Four format that the International Committee of the Red Cross should have full and unconditional access to all areas of Ukraine. To this day, there has been no access beyond the line of contact. Here too, it is the separatists that have not implemented that provision. In addition, the provision concerning the withdrawal of all foreign armed formations has also not been implemented.

Let me finish by touching upon one key point in the remarks of my Russian colleague, where he differentiates between Russia, on the one hand, and Donetsk and Luhansk, on the other. I do not agree with my colleague on this point. By way of example, 10 days ago the head of the Donetsk People’s Republic, Denis Pushilin, said on his website that Mr. Pashkov would be the acting Prime Minister of Donetsk. Previously, Mr. Pashkov was the Vice-Governor of Irkutsk, which, to my knowledge, is in Russia. As to the second incident with regard to Russia’s role, according to the Acting Head of the General Administration for Migration Issues of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, Ms. Valentina Kazakova, Russia has issued Russian passports to the 227,000 inhabitants of the separatists territories.

Finally, let me explain to my colleagues Russia’s influence on the separatists. I was in Minsk, where the agreements were negotiated all night and the Minsk package was concluded. Someone then said that it was between the Normandy Four, and someone else said that the separatists had to sign, after which Mr. Surkov, the negotiator at the time, said that he would secure their signature. It took him about 10 minutes to get the separatists to sign off on the package. So much for the independence of the separatists from Russia.

**Mr. Singer Weisinger** (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to start by thanking Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Ms. Heidi Grau and Mr. Halit Çevik for their outstanding briefings. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome His Excellency Mr. Sergiy Kyslytsya here today.

The Dominican Republic believes that achieving peace must be a collective responsibility. We therefore appreciate the political and diplomatic efforts made on the ground to create the conditions to restore peace and stability to the Ukrainian people. Following the signing of the Minsk agreements and the subsequent adoption of resolution 2202 (2015), we note continuing violations of the ceasefire, as indicated in the reports of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. It is concerning that these are so numerous. Worse still, the continuing high death toll is compounded by the alarming number of people affected by poverty and internal displacement.

During the conflict, cracks have emerged in the system of public services for civilians, including the limitation of crossing points used daily by thousands of people, the inability to provide timely quality services to meet the needs of the inhabitants in the affected areas, including poor or non-existent mental health care, care for victims of gender violence and other, no less important matters. In that connection, we welcome the efforts and solidarity of the international community to help the most vulnerable population in this area.

The Dominican Republic welcomes the meeting of the quartet in the Normandy format, held in Paris in December. We especially thank France and Germany for their efforts in this quest for peace. That important relaunching of the peace negotiations gave birth to the necessary decision to respect the ceasefire regime, to clear mines and to open new border crossings and three new areas for the withdrawal of forces and equipment

within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group at the end of March.

We also welcome an additional result of the Paris meeting — the recent exchange of 200 prisoners, a positive step towards progress in the peace process. These actions show the political will of the parties to move towards a definitive solution. We urge the parties to focus on the objectives of the Minsk agreements, with the necessary determination to overcome difficulties and to reach a consensus on differences in order to fully implement the agreements. That is why we believe that it is appropriate to convene a future Normandy format meeting in order to ensure that local elections are held in the best conditions and guarantee the continuity of the negotiations within the framework of the implementation of the peace agreements. We reiterate our commitment to defending the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine, within the internationally recognized borders, while continuing to urge respect for the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes.

In conclusion, on the fifth anniversary of the Minsk agreements, we continue to insist that those agreements constitute the legal basis for resolving the conflict in eastern Ukraine and the instrument for achieving the political solution that the country and the region long for. We call for the continuation of dialogue between the parties under the auspices of the current Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. Furthermore, we express our support for the package of measures endorsed through the Council's adoption of resolution 2202 (2015), which seek the effective implementation of those peace agreements.

**Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom): I thank our briefers who are joining us via video-teleconference from Kyiv and the Under Secretary-General.

The Minsk agreements provide a road map to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The United Kingdom reiterates its firm support for those agreements and Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. I welcome the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs here today and thank him for joining us. The United Kingdom underlines its support for French and German efforts to facilitate a negotiated end to the conflict through the Normandy process.

We welcome President Zelenskyy's clear commitment to ending the conflict and the important steps that he has taken towards achieving peace through

diplomatic means, including prisoner exchanges, his acceptance of the Steinmeier formula and progress on disengagement.

The Russian Ambassador spoke at length about the failure of others in fulfilling their obligations under the Minsk agreements. His account was largely a falsehood wrapped in a fiction inside a fairy tale. Rather than elaborate on where we believe the Russian account is misleading, I will say simply that I endorse what the German representative said in laying out all the areas of the agreements that Russia has violated. Rather than reining in its proxies in the non-Government-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine, Russia has furnished them with arms and personnel. Russia claims to act only in the interest of the Ukrainians living in those areas but does nothing to ensure the safe delivery of international humanitarian aid so desperately needed by many of the communities there. Russia's only objective in Ukraine is to undermine that country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It wants Moscow rather than the Ukrainians themselves to define Ukraine's future.

We agree with Russia that local elections should pave the way for special status to be granted in parts of the Donbas region, but the local elections can take place only in proper conditions, and these conditions include a comprehensive ceasefire, unfettered access for the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the withdrawal of foreign troops. As we heard, that is a far cry from the reality we face today.

Two months since the previous Normandy Four summit, ceasefire violations continue along the line of contact, including the use of heavy artillery. Ukrainian troops continue to die at the hands of separatists armed and sponsored by Russia. As recently as this morning, as other speakers noted, there was a sharp increase in violations of the ceasefire near the Zolote disengagement area.

Despite the efforts of international demining organizations like the HALO Trust — an organization that my Government is proud to support — Russia's proxies are planting yet more mines near the Petrivske disengagement area. We heard how the Special Monitoring Mission's freedom of movement is severely limited, and we constantly see the Monitoring Mission's reporting of sophisticated Russian equipment, such as the Zhitel jamming device. In 2018 and 2019, Special Monitoring Mission long-range unmanned aerial

vehicles observed military-type tracks on dirt-track roads between the border and a holding site in the non-Government controlled areas on no fewer than seven occasions.

The culmination of those Russian actions has had a devastating impact on the lives of Ukrainian civilians. In the six years since the conflict began, more than 13,000 people, including approximately 3,500 civilians, have lost their lives and almost 30,000 have been injured. Some 3.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. Russia bears a heavy responsibility for the ongoing suffering.

We therefore invite Russia to immediately cease the practice of sending uninspected “humanitarian convoys” across the border and to focus instead on facilitating the safe delivery of international aid, based on an agreed international mechanism, as foreseen under the Minsk agreements. We also look to Russia to ensure that the International Committee of the Red Cross has full and unconditional access to the detainees held in the non-Government controlled areas — access that, the OSCE has said, was denied as recently as January.

Russia claims that it is not party to the conflict. In reality, Russia started the conflict in Ukraine. Russia continues to fuel the conflict in Ukraine, and people suffer because of it. I for one welcome the Russian Ambassador’s enthusiasm for Security Council meetings on Ukraine, and we look forward to other future opportunities to ask Russia what Russia is doing to ensure that the agreements are implemented.

I would like to conclude by reiterating 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, and we will continue to hold Russia to account to that end.

**Ms. King** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): We begin by joining the members of the Council in welcoming all our briefers today and extend our gratitude to them for their informative briefings. We note the presence of the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines continues to stand steadfast in its advocacy of and adherence to the immutable principles of international law. These are

the foundational truths upon which our international community is built and within which small States like ours are able to exist. To deviate from these principles would be an assault on the rights and privileges of all States, and we deplore any action to this effect.

We express our concern about the current situation in the Donbas region. International law cannot be sporadically applied or set aside in the pursuit of convenient or expedient solutions. Its application must be equal. To that end, we underscore the relevant international principles as the guiding tools in the resolution of the crisis, including the Minsk agreements.

Recently, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines emphasized its support for the Minsk agreements, as we expressed our hope for the full implementation under the auspices of the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. The tenets outlined in the Minsk agreements are necessary for lasting peace. We highlight the importance of the ceasefire in achieving that and deplore all violations of this measure. The ceasefire remains an indispensable component of the agreements.

We take this opportunity to recognize recent efforts that have been made, particularly as they relate to confidence-building measures. Trust between and among relevant parties is crucial to strengthening our dialogue and achieving a sustainable solution. Continued prisoner exchanges must be encouraged, as should efforts towards identifying further areas of disengagement.

We are also encouraged by the fact that the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (SMM) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has recorded fewer ceasefire violations in some areas. We welcome the work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, which continues to observe security across the region and report on the situation. In order to facilitate the Mission in the discharge of its mandate, we emphasize the need for safe and secure access for its staff on the ground, including unrestricted movement of SMM personnel.

In conclusion, we emphasize our support for the Special Monitoring Mission and the framework established by the Minsk agreements, and stress the need for the unconditional implementation by both parties of the provisions therein.

**Mr. Syihab** (Indonesia): I would like to begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo, Ms. Heidi Grau and Mr. Halit Çevik for their briefings. On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the Minsk agreements, Indonesia would like to highlight the following three points.

First, we must uphold respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. Indonesia reaffirms its principled and consistent position that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States are fundamental principles of relations among nations, including in Ukraine. Indonesia is therefore against any actions of annexation of any sovereign country or territory. That is a clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Secondly, there must be full adherence to, and implementation of, the Minsk agreements, which constitute the legal basis for achieving a political solution and provide a road map for settling the conflict in Ukraine. Indonesia supports the full implementation of the agreements, in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter. We encourage the relevant stakeholders to uphold those commitments fully. That will be a crucial confidence-booster to ultimately pave the way for a political solution and restore peace and stability in the affected areas.

Indonesia also takes note of the work carried out by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Trilateral Contact Group in the implementation of the agreements. We call on all parties to immediately cease hostilities and commit to fully respecting the ceasefire and refraining from provocations that could lead to more tension. In line with the Minsk agreements, the parties should refrain from actions that could be viewed as provocative and further impede a peaceful resolution.

Thirdly, conflicts must be peacefully settled. Indonesia reiterates its call on all the parties concerned to exercise the utmost restraint, manage the crisis responsibly, promote a peaceful settlement and uphold respect for international law. We call on them to achieve a comprehensive and balanced solution through dialogue, as stipulated in Article 33 of the Charter. In doing so, Indonesia encourages the States concerned to take necessary measures to de-escalate tensions. We are against any actions that exacerbate hostilities and deteriorate the already fragile situation on the ground.

Let me end by reiterating that Indonesia will fully support all constructive efforts aimed at resolving the conflict in Ukraine peacefully, in accordance with international law and Charter principles. We once again urge a peaceful solution to the crisis in Ukraine according to the relevant Security Council resolutions and the agreements signed by the parties involved.

**Ms. Tshabalala** (South Africa): I thank Belgium for facilitating today's discussion on the letter from the Russian Federation dated 13 April 2014 (S/2014/264). We would also like to thank the briefers for their informative briefings.

Five years have passed since the signing of the Minsk agreements. While there have recently been some encouraging developments, such as the meetings of the Normandy Four, the full implementation of all the provisions of the agreements has yet to be realized. My delegation commends the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for its efforts in Ukraine as it diligently executes its mandate in monitoring the implementation of the 2015 Minsk agreements, endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2202 (2015).

The OSCE has also been successful in facilitating dialogue between the parties in seeking a resolution to the situation. In that regard, it is important that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine be allowed unhindered access to monitor and verify compliance with the Minsk agreements, in line with its mandate. It remains necessary for all parties to fully implement all their respective commitments under the Minsk agreements. We must stress that the Minsk agreements, including the package of measures, provide the most promising road map for peace in the long term.

It is clear from the briefings that we heard this afternoon that there remains an urgent need for the immediate cessation of hostilities in eastern Ukraine. The continued violations of the ceasefire and the increased tensions due to the presence of heavy weapons and their use, in violation of the Minsk agreements, are of serious concern. The ongoing tensions and conflict have negatively impacted the humanitarian situation on the ground.

We call for the urgent de-escalation of tensions to allow for a situation that is conducive to the alleviation of the humanitarian crisis and the delivery of aid to those most in need. We also encourage the parties to refrain from actions that could be viewed as provocative

and aimed at exacerbating tensions. Such actions place obstacles in the path of meaningful dialogue and may further impede a peaceful resolution of the situation in line with the Minsk agreements.

Let me conclude by reiterating my country's position on the need for compromise and dialogue. South Africa will continue to encourage the parties to strengthen all diplomatic efforts to produce a sustainable and peaceful solution. In that regard, we wish to re-emphasize the importance and welcome the recent and upcoming meetings of the Normandy Four countries. We encourage all efforts, including the increased role of the Normandy Four, to facilitate ongoing initiatives to build trust in seeking a long-term, peaceful and sustainable solution to the situation in Ukraine.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks the Under-Secretary-General, Ms. DiCarlo; the Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairperson-in-Office, Ambassador Grau; and the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission Chief Monitor, Ambassador Çevik, for their briefings.

In February 2015, the Minsk agreements were signed and subsequently endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2202 (2015). China believes that the agreements have played a vital role in the political mediation of the Ukrainian crisis. Over five years, their authority has been fully recognized by all parties. The various mechanisms related to the implementation of the agreements have generally functioned smoothly.

We note that in December last year, the Normandy Four summit was successfully relaunched and the parties reached an important consensus on the implementation of the Minsk agreements, which is a clear indication that the Normandy format retains the full support of all the parties and remains the key to the political mediation of the Ukrainian crisis.

China calls on the parties to fully implement the agreements, remain committed to achieving a political settlement and seek a comprehensive solution to the crisis through dialogue and consultation in order to facilitate the realization of peace, stability and development in Ukraine, promote harmony among all ethnic groups in Ukraine and foster Ukraine's peaceful coexistence with the other countries of the region.

China has always adopted an objective and impartial position on the Ukrainian crisis and respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, including Ukraine. It also opposes interference in Ukraine's internal affairs by any foreign forces. We have always believed that there is no military solution to the crisis and that dialogue and negotiation are the only way forward. China will continue to play a constructive role in reaching a political settlement to the Ukrainian crisis.

**Mr. Ladeb** (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Ms. Heidi Grau and Ambassador Halit Çevik for their valuable briefings. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome His Excellency Mr. Sergiy Kyslytsya, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. We hope that this meeting, which coincides with the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Minsk agreements, will contribute to more efforts to advance a peaceful settlement in eastern Ukraine and to end the crisis through negotiations.

In his briefing to the Security Council two weeks ago (see S/PV.8714), the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) addressed the crisis in eastern Ukraine. At that meeting, Tunisia expressed its commitment to all efforts aimed at strengthening international peace and security. Given our adherence to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, Tunisia today stresses once again our steadfast position based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and non-interference in their internal affairs. Those are fundamental elements of peaceful relations among States. In that context, my delegation asserts its support for the efforts of all parties concerned to reach a comprehensive solution to the crisis in eastern Ukraine through dialogue and negotiations, in accordance with Article 33 of the Charter and the Minsk agreements, particularly within the Normandy Four and the Trilateral Contact Group, and based on resolution 2202 (2015).

My country's delegation wishes to commend the positive developments registered throughout 2019, including the meeting of the Normandy Four in Paris in December, the prisoner exchange process in September, progress made in the negotiations, the establishment of new disengagement areas and the opening of new crossing points along the line of contact. Those positive steps contribute to paving the way towards a peaceful

settlement of the crisis and to alleviating the suffering of the population concerned. We call for those positive developments to be built upon in order to ensure that conditions do not regress into a cycle of violence, especially given the concerns expressed in the briefings about violence and the number of casualties.

My country's delegation reiterates the important role of the OSCE in advancing efforts to resolve the crisis. We express our appreciation and support for the efforts of the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, within the framework of its mandate, to monitor and report on the security situation, facilitate dialogue to reduce tension and enhance confidence-building measures. My delegation also appreciates the continued work of the Trilateral Contact Group and its various working teams, and reiterates its call for a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire while fully implementing the Minsk agreements, as well as respect of all parties for their commitments under those agreements.

Amid the continued momentum in the ongoing peace efforts, my delegation hopes to see improvement in the humanitarian situation through the concerted efforts of all parties to provide assistance and protection to the population in the areas concerned, including such basic needs as health care and services, food security and education in the areas close to the line of contact and elsewhere, based on the report issued by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, especially in light of the shortage of financing for the humanitarian response plan.

In conclusion, in the context of the growing challenges to international peace and security, I emphasize once again my delegation's hope to see acceleration in the implementation of all concluded agreements and the outcomes of follow-up meetings with a view to reach a comprehensive peace settlement to the crisis in eastern Ukraine. That will contribute to restoring stability and strengthening the elements of regional security and prosperity for the peoples of the region.

**Mr. Jürgenson** (Estonia): I welcome Deputy Foreign Minister Kyslytsya to our meeting today.

I wish to begin by thanking the Russian representative for calling for this briefing today, after having witnessed yet another attack in Luhansk oblast by Russian-supported armed formations. Weapons that were prohibited by the Minsk agreements were used, leading to casualties. It is a grave violation of the Minsk

agreements and an unfortunate display of Russia's disregard for its recommitment to the ceasefire during the Paris meeting. However, let us not forget that this is only one chapter in the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine that has continued for the past six years.

I am grateful to Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her important and comprehensive briefing, as well as to the Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairperson-in-Office, Ms. Heidi Grau, and the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (SMM), Mr. Halit Çevik, for their updates on activities on the ground.

Six years since Russia's military aggression against Ukraine began, we regret that Russia has not acknowledged and reversed its actions. 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. The use of force against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine by the Russian Federation clearly violates the fundamental principles of international law. It violates paragraph 4 of Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the Helsinki Final Act.

The Minsk agreements remain the basis for a political resolution to the conflict in Donbas. The Russian Federation, however, has continued to breach the Minsk agreements on a regular basis since they were adopted, as we have also witnessed today. It has breached, in particular, the first point of the Minsk agreements — to end the interference and ensure a comprehensive ceasefire. Its actions have left more than 27,000 people wounded and over 14,000 dead, including the 298 passengers on Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17, which was shot down by a Russian BUK missile system.

Moreover, Russia's initiatives — such as conducting illegal elections, conscripting Ukrainian citizens into the Russian army and pursuing the illegal passportization of Ukrainian citizens — all run counter to the spirit of the Minsk agreements and further obstruct the settlement in Donbas. Let me recall that there is a 400-kilometre uncontrolled border between Ukraine and Russia. That uncontrolled section is a

gateway for the free flow of weaponry and military personnel. Russia's actions in Ukraine pose numerous threats to international peace and security.

We therefore call on Russia, as a party to the conflict, to fully implement its commitments under the Minsk agreements, including those undertaken at the Normandy Four summit in Paris on 9 December. We also call on Russia to immediately withdraw its armed forces from Ukraine and stop its political, financial and military support to the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics — that is, Russia's proxies in Donbas.

We commend President Zelenskyy for his strong efforts towards resolving and de-escalating the conflict in Donbas, including initiatives and bold actions that have brought positive developments, such as the exchange of prisoners, the proposal to disengage forces in three areas and the reconstruction of the bridge at Stanytsia Luhanska. We would like to thank the OSCE, including the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and the Special Monitoring Mission, for all their indispensable work in Ukraine.

The SMM remains the most reliable source of information on the situation on the ground in Ukraine. It is therefore regrettable that the restrictions posed on the SMM's freedom of movement have persisted in non-Government-controlled areas, hindering the Mission from fully implementing its mandate. The SMM's full, secure and unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine should be guaranteed. Recently, we heard about OSCE efforts and restrictions on the work of the SMM directly from OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, right here in the Security Council (see S/PV.8714). He mentioned the idea of a United Nations peacekeeping mission to Ukraine that would monitor the Russian-Ukrainian border and provide a safe environment and for the restoration of the sovereignty of Ukraine. However, in March 2015, Ukraine's request for the Security Council to deploy a peacekeeping operation under the auspices of the United Nations was blocked by the Russian Federation — yet another example of the sheer reluctance to take any steps to resolve the conflict.

We remain deeply concerned about the grave humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine. Approximately 3.4 million Ukrainians still need humanitarian assistance and protection. In addition to psychological trauma and the lack of access to basic

services, about 2 million people live in areas that are heavily contaminated with landmines. Despite aid efforts, the 2019 humanitarian appeal remained only 50 per cent funded. I call on the international community to intensify its financial support for Ukraine.

International human rights law also continues to be violated in the civil, political, economic, social, cultural and religious domains in the occupied areas. Violations are targeted towards persons belonging to any minority group or organization that dissents from the views of the Government of the Russian Federation — mostly Ukrainian activists, Crimean Tatars and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. According to the recent report of the Secretary-General on the human rights situation in Crimea (A/74/276), arbitrary arrests, house raids, groundless detentions, harassment, intimidation, unfair trials, degrading treatment of detainees, torture, sexual violence and other violations remain systematic and unpunished. Those violations must stop immediately. All persons detained illegally must be released. And international human rights monitoring mechanisms, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations, must be given access to the annexed and occupied territories.

**Mr. Abarry (Niger)** (*spoke in French*): Allow me, through you, Madam President, to sincerely thank Ms. DiCarlo as well as the other two briefers, who joined our meeting today via video-teleconference. I would also like to welcome the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to today's meeting.

The Security Council was briefed on 6 February on the current priorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (see S/PV.8714), including achieving tangible results in conflict and post-conflict environments. To that end, special attention was paid to the crisis in Ukraine, which remains the most pressing security issue in Europe. Although the conflict threatens peace and security, it also has an impact on the daily lives of civilians, in particular as it pertains to the freedom of movement and the humanitarian situation.

As in other crisis-affected areas, the humanitarian situation, including the plight of women and children, deserves special attention. Financial resources must therefore be mobilized in order to meet the needs of the most vulnerable segments of the population. Allow me to commend the efforts of the OSCE Special Monitoring



Mission to Ukraine, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the European External Action Service and the United Nations Development Programme to bring about tangible improvements on the ground in an effort to assist those in need.

The 2015 Minsk agreements marked a turning point in the crisis in Ukraine, as they reflected the willingness of the parties to reach a consensus-based solution. It is for that reason that the Niger supports all measures to implement the agreements, which were endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2202 (2015), of 17 February 2015. We call on the parties to fully implement those agreements and demonstrate political will in order to create the right conditions for peace. We also welcome the resumption of the dialogue within the framework of the Normandy format, following the summit held in Paris on 9 December 2019, whose conclusions should be welcomed. The efforts made by the Trilateral Contact Group should also be supported. We encourage the OSCE to intensify its efforts to effectively monitor and verify the ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons, in accordance with the agreements I just mentioned.

In conclusion, as in other hotspots, the parties must work to find not a military solution, but a political one — the only kind of any value.

**Mr. Dinh** (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo, Her Excellency Ms. Heidi Grau and His Excellency Mr. Halit Çevik for their insightful briefings on the implementation of resolution 2202 (2015), the Minsk agreements and the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine. I would also like to welcome His Excellency the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to today's meeting.

Over the past few months, we have seen encouraging signs of progress on issues related to the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. A number of detained persons associated with the conflict were released in prisoner exchanges. After a long standstill, the Normandy format meeting held on 9 December 2019 enabled the successful resumption of communication processes at the highest level. We would like to commend the great efforts of the Normandy Four leaders, as well as their commitment to a sustainable and inclusive architecture of trust and security in Europe. I look forward to forthcoming meetings.

Meanwhile, the situation on the ground in the region is still of serious concern. Incidents, including armed hostilities, occur every day in that part of Europe. The conflict continues to cause death, injuries, displacement, shelter destruction and the lack of basic living conditions for millions of civilians — many of whom are elderly, women and children.

We hope that the momentum for stabilization and de-escalation will continue, with the aim of moving further towards a peaceful settlement to the situation, in accordance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant Security Council resolutions. In that regard, we call for greater efforts to fully implement the Minsk agreements. We also look forward to the concrete implementation of a comprehensive ceasefire regime, the development and implementation of additional disengagement areas and an updated mine clearance plan, among other measures. We urge the parties to explore further trust-building steps by promoting dialogue and negotiations.

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

Six years following the start of hostilities, the conflict in Ukraine remains the deadliest on the European continent. We cannot accept the fact that the conflict, which has led to the deaths of more than 13,000 persons, rages on, while millions of men and women continue to suffer as a result of the war. It is for that reason that, over the past few months, France, along with Germany, has worked to give new impetus to efforts to resolve the conflict. The Heads of State of the four countries of the Normandy format met in Paris on 9 December last year and reaffirmed their commitment to a set of principles. First and foremost, they reaffirmed their commitment to the Minsk agreements as a framework for the settlement of the conflict. Then, during the summit, we also set out tangible specific measures to make headway towards the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Those are the measures that now need to be implemented, and the Trilateral Contact Group is working towards that end.

A first positive step was taken with the release and exchange of 200 prisoners on 29 December. Discussions

are ongoing in order to facilitate the exchange of all conflict-related prisoners. France recalls the vital nature of access for international organizations and the International Committee of the Red Cross to all detained persons on either side of the contact line and of the identification of the approximately 1,500 persons who have disappeared since 2014.

Progress is necessary in a number of other areas. Violations of the ceasefire continue on a daily basis, notwithstanding the commitment reiterated on 9 December to ensure full respect for it along the contact line. In that regard, I deplore today's fighting, which has caused at least one death and several injuries. I call on the parties, in particular the separatist armed groups, to refrain from any provocation, in order to avoid any military escalation on the ground.

The OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine is contributing every day to ensuring accurate monitoring of the security situation, thanks to the courage of the women and men engaged on the ground. We condemn in the strongest possible terms all actions that undermine their security or aim at obstructing their mission. The mandate of the Special Mission must be able to be fully implemented throughout the territory of Ukraine, including near the Russian-Ukrainian border. The identification of new disengagement zones and the question of identifying and opening new crossing points are very concrete issues. Progress is expected in that context as well, just as it is expected in the area of mine clearance.

Beyond those measures, the objective remains the implementation of the political clauses of the Minsk agreements. That is the most difficult part, but the current momentum should enable progress to be made in defining local self-government arrangements for certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and in incorporating the Steinmeier formula into Ukrainian legislation. In that context, civilian populations are the first victims. Ukraine is facing one of the biggest humanitarian crises of the last 10 years. Some 3.4 million people continue to depend on humanitarian assistance. Every effort must be made to facilitate access for humanitarian organizations and United Nations agencies, especially in the territories controlled by the separatist entities.

We call on all parties to implement their obligations and on Russia to use its influence on the separatists for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements,

in the interests of a civilian population now caught between heavy weapons and mines. Pending the return to a lasting peace, to which we are endeavouring to contribute by continuing negotiations and the prospect of a forthcoming summit in Normandy format, Ukraine can count on the full and complete support of France.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Belgium.

Five years after the signing of the Minsk agreements, the implementation of their key provisions remains a dead letter, which is reflected in a deterioration of the humanitarian and human rights situation on the ground. We therefore call on the parties to implement the Minsk agreements rapidly and fully and to honour their commitments.

We support the efforts made both in the Normandy format and in the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group. We welcome the conclusions of the meeting in the Normandy format held in Paris on 9 December 2019 and look forward to a continued and deepened dialogue. In order for those efforts to fully bear fruit, it is essential that a lasting ceasefire be put in place. In that regard, we are particularly concerned about the most recent escalation of violence and call for the utmost restraint.

We regret that the parties, in particular Russia, continue to obstruct the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine in its monitoring and reporting tasks. We strongly encourage both sides to respect the mandate of the Mission and to allow it safe and unhindered access to all Ukrainian territory, including the territories bordering Ukraine and Russia, as well as the Crimea.

We are deeply concerned about the impact of the conflict on human rights, including the right to life, the right to liberty and non-discrimination, in particular with regard to internally displaced persons. We call for free and confidential access for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other international observers to all places of detention in the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic.

The statistic of the 3.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance reminds us that the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine requires our attention. We urge all parties to allow full access in accordance with humanitarian principles. We are

deeply concerned about the targeting of critical civilian infrastructure, such as water and sanitation facilities, as well as schools. In that regard, we welcome the endorsement by the Government of Ukraine of the Safe Schools Declaration, which demonstrates its commitment to protecting education in times of armed conflict.

We remain deeply concerned about reports of the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in areas controlled by armed formations. The presence of heavy weapons, which is contrary to the Minsk agreements, continues to be a threat to the civilian population on both sides of the line of contact. We call for a complete withdrawal of those weapons as well as the disengagement of troops from the designated areas. As eastern Ukraine is one of the most mine-contaminated areas in the world, we call for further efforts to demarcate and mark contaminated areas, as well as for mine clearance, especially in the vicinity of schools and entry and exit points. We are concerned about the underfunding of the humanitarian response plan and call on the international community to engage more actively in this area.

In conclusion, we call on all parties to work towards a lasting solution to this conflict, based on respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

**Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine):** First of all, I thank those members of the Security Council who have expressed their strong solidarity with Ukraine in the face of the ongoing Russian aggression. I also express our appreciation for the informative briefings today.

When the Russian Federation called for a Council meeting on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the package of measures, the third component of the Minsk agreements, one might have believed that Russia finally planned to report to the Council that it was going to honour the agreements made in this very Chamber in 2015.

Although not adopted under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, resolution 2202 (2015) has been a very important message from the Council to all parties to implement the agreements, most important

to respect a comprehensive ceasefire. Would it make any difference if the Council then, in 2015, had legal grounds to adopt a mandatory document under Chapter VII? If the document had been endowed with a different legal nature, would that be a compelling enough reason for the Russian Federation to implement it?

I have no time to dwell hereon the recent constitutional amendments, as proposed in Moscow, that effectively nullify the mandatory nature of international law and international treaties in the Russian Federation. We continue to believe that the Minsk agreements should be implemented, including by the Russian Federation, which so persistently dissociates itself from the agreements.

Where do we find ourselves today? It looks as if the answer was given at 6 a.m. local time, when our positions were attacked. The attack carried out today, on the fifth anniversary of the Debaltseve tragedy, is particularly cynical. The Ukrainian armed forces provided an adequate response to that offensive — carried out by the Russian occupation forces with the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons — in the exercise of Ukraine's inherent right to self-defence.

It is clear that the Kremlin continues to pursue a strategy of escalation in Donbas, in flagrant violation of Russia's obligations, which they have undertaken as a party to the Minsk agreements.

As Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said earlier today, "This is an attempt to disrupt the peace process in Donbas, which has started to move forward by small yet incessant steps". The Ukrainian leadership has confirmed that our commitment to ending this war and to adhering to the agreements reached remains unshaken, as does our resolve to repel any acts of armed aggression against Ukraine.

In total disregard of the agreements reached in Paris in December last year by the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany, over the past two months our positions have been shelled more than 400 times. Since the beginning of the year, 13 Ukrainian servicemen have been killed and almost 60 wounded.

Can anyone call this a frozen conflict? Or, perhaps, a low-intensity conflict? It is a war — the only ongoing war in Europe. It is a full-scale war waged by Russian troops and Russia's mercenaries, with weapons and ammunition supplied by the Russian Federation. That is exactly why the Organization for Security and

Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission, as we have learned from Mission reports, is still restricted in terms of freedom of movement and deprived of proper access to the Russian-Ukrainian border.

Whenever reminded of its own Minsk commitments, Russia immediately points a finger at Ukraine, saying that it is we who should hold a so-called direct dialogue with the representatives of two so-called local authorities in the temporarily occupied part of Donbas. But what are they?

How local is the recently appointed so-called acting head of government of Donetsk, Vladimir Pashkov? This citizen of Russia, born in Siberia, graduated from the Russian Military Pacific Navy School and, until recently, was the Vice-Governor of the Irkutsk region of Russia. Would members like to know how close Irkutsk is to Donetsk? An insignificant 6,000 kilometres. Still, he is local enough, in the opinion of Moscow, to rule in Donbas and to be involved in talks about Donbas's future. There is no justification for someone from Siberia to be telling us Ukrainians what to do on our own territory.

The unfortunate experience of Georgia and Moldova with direct dialogue with the Kremlin's puppets proves that in the best-case scenario this is a road to nowhere; most probably it is a highway leading directly to a trap.

As has happened before, Russia is trying to present the victim of its aggression as the perpetrator thereof. That is one of the hallmarks of its information war against Ukraine. Such vain attempts to twist the truth could have been viewed as pathetic and even laughable were it not a cynical insult to the memory of the thousands of my compatriots who have lost their lives defending their land.

I pay tribute here to the memory of those protesters who were gunned down in cold blood in Maidan exactly six years ago, on the night of 18 February, which is now often called the Night of the Apocalypse; to the memory of heroes such as Sergiy Kokurin — ethnically Russian, by the way, a father of two, the first Ukrainian citizen killed in Crimea by a Russian sniper on 18 March 2014, during the military phase of the attempted annexation of the peninsula; to the memory of Klavdia Sytnyk, a young single mother, a paramedic who lost her life on the first day of this month under a barrage of Russian mortars while delivering medications to the wounded; and to the memory of 22-year-old Maxim, who was

killed today by bullets supplied by the Russians. My son is about the same age.

We should not lose sight of the broader context of the Russian armed aggression against Ukraine. Six years of Russia's military invasion in Donbas have killed more than 13,000 people and wounded more than 27,000. More than 1.4 million residents of Donbas are now internally displaced persons. The areas seized have turned into a land of fear and terror, with local economies destroyed and equipment belonging to enterprises wrecked or moved to Russia. More than 3.4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance this year. In addition, this territory, according to the United Nations, has already become one of the most mine-contaminated in the world, as has been repeatedly mentioned today.

The Russian Federation continues to supply its occupation forces with weapons, regular troops and mercenaries, to the extent that now they dwarf many European armies, with approximately 500 tanks, around 1,000 armoured combat vehicles and almost 800 artillery systems. Just last year, the Russian Federation sent more than 4,000 tons of weapons and munitions into the occupied territories of Donbas.

As if that were not enough, Russia is also pursuing illegal passportization in the temporarily occupied territories of Donbas, which has now reached an industrial level — more than 125,000 persons were issued Russian passports there.

The east is not the only front line in Ukraine. In the south, as a result of Russia's attempted annexation of Crimea, the peninsula has been turned into a human rights ghetto and a huge military base, upending regional security, as Russia uses it also for its Syria interventions. The number of political hostages has skyrocketed, and Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars have been repressed. A wall of silence has been built around the peninsula, repelling any international scrutiny, in violation of General Assembly resolutions. According to the Secretary-General's report on Crimea and regular reports by the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, Russia is pursuing covert demographic change, bringing in more than 130,000 military and civil servants in and pushing the local population out. The militarization of occupied Crimea is in full gear as Russia is bringing in additional troops and sophisticated weapons.

By launching the so-called Crimean bridge, Russia has not only grossly violated international law and its

bilateral treaty obligations; it has created huge economic losses for Ukraine and an exponential environmental threat to the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.

Against all odds, Ukraine is working for peace. Achieving peace was a major motivator for Ukrainians who cast their votes in last year's presidential and parliamentary elections.

Another demand of the voters continues to be the return of those who have been illegally detained in the occupied territories of Ukraine and in Russia, who have been held in inhumane conditions and frequently tortured for many years. There are still more than 200 Ukrainians held in uncontrolled parts of Donbas, as well as more than 100 Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars in Crimea and Russia.

The Ukrainian side successfully initiated two major mutual releases of detainees with Russia and work is ongoing to ensure their "all for all" release. I take this opportunity to call on colleagues to join me in our appeal to the Russian side to stop preventing unhindered access to detainees by the International Committee of the Red Cross and its search for missing persons.

We believe that the agreements reached in Paris in December should expedite the resolution of the conflict. A full and comprehensive ceasefire and unhindered access 24/7 for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission throughout the entire occupied territory would facilitate the process. While the Russian Foreign Minister gives an endless list as to why the next Normandy summit is not feasible, we are working hard and doing our best to make it possible, as agreed by the leaders of the four countries.

As President Zelenskyy stressed only a few days ago, we are fully committed to that endeavour, as evidenced by the new initiative on sectoral disengagement, where the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission will play a key verification role to ensure that a given sector is free from illegally armed groups, foreign armed formations and military equipment.

We look forward to holding local elections throughout the territory of Ukraine, including its temporarily occupied parts, once the security and political conditions allow it in accordance with Ukrainian legislation and the Copenhagen document of OSCE and under Ukraine's control of its internationally recognized borders.

We are working hard to finally bring this Russian-Ukrainian war, which was not started by us, to an end no matter how hard the other side tries to prolong it in order to bleed Ukraine dry. We will continue to achieve sustainable peace exclusively through peaceful diplomatic means in accordance with international law. This can be done only together with the Council, including those members present here who are genuinely interested in bringing about peace in Europe as we are about to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the end of the Second World War and of the creation of the United Nations. Otherwise, our anniversary gathering in New York this autumn will be a gruesome memorial service rather than a celebration of global peace and security.

Today's discussion does not cover all the essential elements for putting an end to Russia's war against Ukraine and, in particular, Russia's temporary occupation of parts of our territory, including Crimea. It was therefore decided that the day after tomorrow the General Assembly will consider the agenda item "Situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine", namely, Donbas and Crimea, as it is fundamentally important that the liberation of Ukrainian territory cannot be said to be complete until the last Russian soldier has left the peninsula. I ask members to join us on Thursday in the General Assembly Hall.

*(spoke in Russian)*

To conclude my statement, I will speak in Russian so that the Russian people who are not indifferent to the present and the future of their country can hear me. Given that today there was a discussion of a new leader of Donetsk — who is from Irkutsk and who was mentioned by Ambassador Heusgen, among others — I wish to recall the fact that some 90 years ago in a small Siberian town in Irkutsk Oblast with the romantic name Zima a son was born to the family of the Baltic German Alexander Gangnus, son of Rudolph Gangnus. In the context of today's discussion, it is worth noting that he was the poet who, returning from a trip to the West at the height of the Cold War, wrote the well-known poem "Do the Russians Want War?". I think that many have already guessed that I am talking about Yevgeny Yevtushenko, also known as Yevgeny Gangnus.

"O, do the Russians long for war?  
Ask of the soldiers who now lie  
Beneath the birch trees

And let their sons tell you  
Whether the Russians long for war.”

I say to the Russian representative that I think that the answer to the question as to whether the Russians want war in the context of today’s Russia will be the parade in Red Square on 9 May, when we will see whether parade participants will carry portraits of Stalin — that same Stalin who has been taken out of the mausoleum and seems is not out of people’s minds. “But how to root out Stalin’s heirs, said Yevtushenko in 1962. He continued:

“Let some repeat over and over again:  
‘Compose yourself!’

I shall never find rest.

As long as Stalin’s heirs exist on earth,

It will seem to me

That Stalin is still in the mausoleum.”

Today, when the glorification of Stalin, whose name is being whitewashed, is gaining traction in the Russian Federation, the memorials to that murderer, dictator and perpetrator of the 1930s genocide of the Ukrainian people are burgeoning.

I wish to conclude my statement with a question to the Russian representative: Indeed, do the Russians long for war?

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to say to the Ukrainian representative that I am glad he is interested in Russian poetry. But that is not surprising — we all come from the same country and were probably taught the same lessons at school. I want to correct him.

“O, do the Russians long for war?

Ask of the stillness evermore

Ask of the soldiers who now lie

Beneath the birch trees ...”

He missed one line.

I do not know whose portraits will be carried on 9 May. I do not think that it will be those of Stalin. I doubt that. However, I wonder what portraits will

be carried in Kyiv on 9 May and whether there will even be a parade in Kyiv commemorating our — by the way — shared victory in the Great Patriotic War.

Today we heard many things. It is impossible to respond to all of it and, in fact, that is not the task before me. Unfortunately, we have not heard anything new. Everything is as before — the same old tune. The representative of Ukraine calls on Moscow to comply with the Minsk agreements but, for some reason, he does not appeal to Kyiv. There is the same tinkering with the Minsk agreements and the issues of cause and effect. It seems that it was Russia that started the war in Ukraine, not Kyiv that came to Donbas.

We again heard that Russia must withdraw its troops. But last year, we asked Mr. Apakan and Mr. Sajdik to tell us about the presence of Russian troops in Donbas (see S/PV.8461). They were unable to say anything precise or satisfactory to those who posed the question. Perhaps Ms. Grau and Mr. Çevik have more information. We can ask them where they saw Russian troops in Donbas.

We are told that with a wave of the hand Moscow can end this conflict as soon as we tell the Donbas representatives. I have a question. My question is this: are they really that naive to think that the Kremlin is puppet master to those individuals in Donbas? Do they actually think those individuals do not have their own opinions, that they are nothing more than puppets of the Kremlin? I do not believe they are so naive as to think so.

My friend Ambassador Heusgen never ceases to amaze me. His country is one of the authors of the Minsk agreements. I personally do not know Mr. Pashkov, who was the Vice-Governor of the Irkutsk region. But I want to ask Mr. Heusgen and Mr. Kyslytsya a question: does the fact that United States citizen Natalie Jaresko was once Finance Minister of Ukraine, that Lithuanian citizen Aivaras Abromavičius was Economy Minister and that United States citizen Ulana Suprun was Minister of Health — incidentally, she is from Chicago, which is 8,000 kilometres from Kyiv, greater than the distance from Kyiv to Irkutsk — lead us to think that the United States and Lithuania are direct parties to the conflict in Ukraine? I will not even mention the example of United States Army Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Vindman, who found himself entangled in the impeachment affair and who claimed that he was three times offered to be made Minister of Defence of

Ukraine — something he himself acknowledged was a joke.

Mr. Heusgen noted that today was a sad day for international law and for Ukraine. Was he referring to the anniversary of the adoption of resolution 2202 (2015), which endorsed the Minsk package of measures? Does it mean that for him the day of the adoption of that resolution is a tragic day? He referred to how Vladislav Surkov deftly persuaded the representatives of Donbas to sign on to the Minsk agreements. Mr. Heusgen perhaps should know that the Donbas representatives who signed the Minsk agreements in 2015 saw it as an enormous concession and defeat. Today the Ukrainian authorities do not even want to engage in dialogue with them, labelling them not just separatists but terrorists.

There was much said about today's hostilities in the area of Holubivske. According to the information available to us, on 18 February a division from the Ukrainian armed forces attempted to destabilize the situation along the line of contact in Donbas. At approximately 6 a.m., a 10-person sabotage group from the armed forces of Ukraine moved towards the positions of the Luhansk forces near Holubivske. That operation by the Ukrainian armed forces was revealed at an early stage. As they approached the contact line, the group tripped a landmine, which killed at least two people and injured three more. In order to evacuate the dead and wounded from the area, the armed forces of Ukraine carried out a large-scale artillery attack targeting residential areas in the Luhansk People's Republic. That offensive strike was carried out using medium-calibre mortars and large-calibre artillery in vicinity of Holubivske, Sokilnyky, Donetskyyi and Smeloye. Ukrainian military forces fired more than 50 mortar shells into the territory of the Luhansk People's Republic.

Mr. Kyslytsya showed us a photograph of an unfortunate 22-year-old young man, Maksim Khitailov, who died today, apparently in the same area. He was a grenade-launcher operator with the 72nd Mechanized Brigade of the Ukrainian armed forces. That is a tragic event, but why are they deploying young men to die there? We remember how Mr. Kyslytsya's former Minister, Mr. Klimkin, seating in that very chair, showed us a photograph of an unfortunate girl who had died on their line of contact. I asked him, the next time he visited the Security Council, to please bring photographs of civilians who had died as a result of the actions of Ukrainian security forces in Donbas. Many

such photographs could be provided. I will do so myself the next time, because most likely I will not wait for the Ukrainian side to do it. This is an ongoing tragedy. And this tragedy must end. The way to end it is by implementing the Minsk agreements.

Mr. Heusgen also told us today about violations at the line of contact. In that regard, let me turn to statistics from the Special Monitoring Mission. Ukrainian forces were responsible for 60 per cent of firing incidents between 9 December 2019 and 12 February 2020. Kyiv committed 3,737 ceasefire violations, as opposed to 2,809 coming from Donbas territory — and that is just the cases in which the violator could be identified. The overall number of violations stands at 45,244 explosions on one side and 12,114 on the other side. There are 304 pieces of equipment west of the line of demarcation — a violation — as opposed to none on the east side. During the same period, Ukrainian security forces targeted three residential areas in Donbas, while there was not a single attack against territory under Kyiv's control.

Unfortunately, he does not want to see what could not be clearer. I do not know what type of eyeglasses could help him see that. I continue to be surprised at where he gets his information about “unfortunate people who have been coping with that tremendous oppression in Russian-occupied Crimea”. I have called on him many times to go to Crimea and have a look for himself how the “unfortunate Crimeans” are suffering there.

Two speakers today mentioned the Malaysian Airlines Flight MH-17 disaster. Of course, that is not the subject of today's meeting. I do not think they should present that information pretending to be a prosecutor. And I myself am not a prosecutor. Moreover, I want to share with the Council some surprising information published by Western media outlets today, namely, that Dutch military intelligence and security services did not detect a single Buk anti-aircraft missile system in the area where the aircraft was downed. We have repeatedly said that the investigation is shockingly closed and opaque. That information, which needs to be verified and corroborated, of course, only serves as proof.

Lastly, I would like once again to recall the fact that it is important for us to understand that there are two sides, not three, in this conflict — and not two, Ukraine and Russia, in the view of our Ukrainian colleagues — namely, it is Donbas and Kyiv. As

long as there is no direct dialogue between Kyiv and Donbas, there can be no settlement in Ukraine, just as there can be no settlement without direct dialog between the parties to the conflicts in Afghanistan, Syria, Cyprus, Colombia or anywhere else in the world. Only an inclusive dialogue can generate opportunities and guarantees for lasting peace. For that reason, the Normandy format is meaningful only if it is geared towards the implementation of the Minsk package of measures, which need to be implemented without any preconditions.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of Ukraine has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

**Mr. Kyslytsya** (Ukraine): The Russian delegation has just presented its account of the nature of the escalation in Donbas today. It was said that is due a provocation led by the armed forces of Ukraine. I want to draw the attention of the Security Council to a statement made today by the Spokesperson of the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Dmitry Peskov, in relation to what happened.

(*spoke in Russian*)

“We do not have the details of this confrontation. We do not know what provoked it. Our hope is that, in the near future, it will be possible to shed light on the details of what occurred, before drawing any conclusions”.

(*spoke in English*)

I now address a question to the Russian delegation: Should we listen the Spokesperson of the Russian President, or should we listen to the talking points written at Sixty-seventh Street in New York?

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of Germany has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

**Mr. Heusgen** (Germany): Since my Russian colleague mentioned my intervention, I would like to give a very quick answer to one of the questions, namely, whether I believed that the separatists in charge in Donetsk and Luhansk were puppets of the Kremlin. Yes, I do believe that.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I say to Mr. Kyslytsya not to try to drive a wedge between me and Spokesperson Peskov. I saw his statement this morning. The information I referred to was not written at Sixty-seventh Street — where the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations is located — it is information we received today after the situation had been clarified.

*The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.*