



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

8461st meeting

Tuesday, 12 February 2019, 3 p.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea)

Members:

Belgium	Mrs. Van Vlierberge
China	Mr. Wu Haitao
Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
Dominican Republic	Ms. Morrison González
France	Mr. Delattre
Germany	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia	Mr. Djani
Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
Peru	Mr. Duclos
Poland	Ms. Wronecka
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
South Africa	Mr. Matjila
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
United States of America	Mr. Cohen

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Peace Operations; Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator; His Excellency Mr. Ertuğrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine; and His Excellency Mr. Martin Sajdik, Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group.

Mr. Apakan and Mr. Sajdik are joining the meeting via video-teleconference from Minsk.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Jenča.

Mr. Jenča: In resolution 2202 (2015), which was unanimously adopted on 17 February 2015, the Security Council endorsed the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements and called on all parties to fully implement the measures, including a much-needed comprehensive and lasting ceasefire. In presidential statement S/PRST/2018/12, of 6 June 2018, the Council again unanimously reaffirmed the centrality of the Minsk agreements.

Four years after their adoption, the Minsk agreements remain the only agreed framework for a negotiated peace in eastern Ukraine. While diplomatic

efforts within the Minsk framework continue, the Minsk provisions, regrettably, remain largely unimplemented, including its key security and political aspects. Negotiations appear to have lost momentum, with the main stakeholders either unable and/or unwilling to reach an agreement on the key steps forward, or being distracted from focusing on the implementation of agreed steps.

I would like to recall that detailed discussions on the implementation of the provisions of the Minsk agreements have been taking place in separate forums, in which the United Nations is not a participant. The Secretary-General has been consistent in stressing the United Nations strong support for the lead role of the Normandy Four, the Trilateral Contact Group, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other key actors in seeking a peaceful settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The Secretary-General has also repeatedly called for revitalizing efforts in these negotiation formats and bilateral channels.

As consistently highlighted by incidents over the past five years, the conflict in eastern Ukraine is neither dormant nor frozen. It is a conflict in the heart of Europe that continues to claim victims. With the five recommitments to the ceasefire by the main stakeholders in the Trilateral Contact Group format last year, there has been a total of over a dozen such ceasefire recommitments since the start of the conflict. Each one was, regrettably, short-lived.

As reported by the OSCE, military advance positions on both sides of the contact line are coming closer to each other in the so called grey areas, while the use of heavy weapons and their deployment in the proximity of the contact line are a reality. This week, another round of discussions within the Trilateral Contact Group will be taking place in Minsk. It is the United Nations sincere hope and expectation that the relevant parties will reach tangible outcomes at these meetings and implement decisions in good faith and without delay.

While there has been an overall reduction in violence since 2014, including in the number of civilian deaths, casualties and destruction continue on an almost weekly basis. At the same time, an estimated 1.5 million people remain internally displaced. The periodic escalations remind us of the unstable reality along the contact line, which continues to adversely

impact the already dire socioeconomic situation and the crumbling infrastructure in the conflict-affected area. There is an urgent need to agree on additional measures that would make the ceasefire sustainable and irreversible. The priority of the parties should be, without delay, to withdraw heavy weapons from populated areas, disengage forces and protect critical civilian infrastructure.

The United Nations remains fully committed to playing its role in continuing to provide humanitarian assistance, human rights monitoring and development support. The scale and urgency of needs arising from the conflict remain immense. Over half a million people live within five kilometres of the contact line and they are the most exposed to periodic shelling, gunfire, landmines and unexploded ordnance. The area around the contact line remains among the most mine-contaminated areas in the world. As called for by the Council in its presidential statement S/PRST/2018/12, of 6 June 2018, it is essential that the international community step up efforts to help meet the humanitarian needs on the ground as part of the humanitarian response plan for Ukraine. The United Nations will continue to spare no effort to fulfil its responsibilities in the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the monitoring of human rights. However, I wish to underline that it is also essential that the United Nations humanitarian efforts on the ground not be politicized or instrumentalized by any side.

This year, the conflict in eastern Ukraine will enter its sixth year. There should be no illusions — while negotiations may have become protracted, this conflict remains today an active threat to international peace and security. It would be misleading to think that time by itself will bring about solutions. On this occasion, and echoing the Security Council's expectations, the United Nations once again calls for swift progress in the implementation of the Minsk agreements. The United Nations also urges all parties to avoid any unilateral steps that could deepen the divide or depart from the spirit and letter of the Minsk agreements.

The conflict in Ukraine is first and foremost tragically affecting the Ukrainian people, but it is also taking place in a context of increasing challenges to the international peace and security framework. The conflict continues to test the credibility of international and regional organizations. In his address to the Council two years ago on conflicts in Europe (see S/PV.7886), the Secretary-General stressed the need

to prevent the emergence of new crises and to resolve existing conflicts in the region. Last month, in his New Year message to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General again singled out the conflict in Ukraine as one of the key challenges that continues to confront the international community. Member States need to work together in the interest of regional stability.

The United Nations underlines the need to fully respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders, in accordance with relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Once again, we urge all parties to demonstrate the necessary political will to ensure the earliest possible end to the conflict and help bring about peace and stability in all of Ukraine.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Jenča for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mueller.

Ms. Mueller: I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine.

Civilians continue to pay the highest price. More than 3,300 civilians have been killed and up to 9,000 injured since the conflict began in 2014. Some 1.5 million people have been internally displaced. The humanitarian consequences are severe. In 2019, 3.5 million people — many of whom are elderly, women and children — will need humanitarian assistance and protection service. For most of them, the impact of the conflict has deepened. They have lost their livelihoods and their limited resources have been exhausted by now. They rely on humanitarian assistance to meet their most basic needs.

Critical civilian infrastructure continues to be damaged or disrupted, compounding people's struggle. In 2018 alone, 89 incidents affected water and sanitation facilities and, in the past 12 months, 12 water workers have been injured due to hostilities and landmine explosions. They were simply trying to do their work, ensuring that water continues to flow to millions of people on both sides of the contact line.

The parties to the conflict must take all feasible precautions to avoid, and in any event minimize civilian harm. International humanitarian law must be upheld to protect civilians and critical civilian infrastructure at all times, everywhere and by all parties.

In the Security Council last October (see S/PV.8386), I welcomed the efforts of the Government of Ukraine to improve crossing conditions at the checkpoints. While there has been progress, I appeal once again for more to be done on both sides. In the entire Luhansk oblast, civilians can cross the contact line through only one checkpoint — the pedestrian bridge of Stanytsia Luhanska. This is simply not enough. With freezing temperatures during Ukraine's winter, it is critical that essential services at crossing points be improved as people continue to wait several hours to cross the contact line. Already this year, 10 people — most of them elderly — have died at the checkpoints. Elderly people account for more than half of the crossings and face long-standing barriers to access their pensions.

I have also called on the Government of Ukraine to adopt a national mine-action framework. Today I am pleased to report that a mine-action law was recently adopted. That now needs to pave the way for urgently scaling up mine-action efforts. Landmine and explosive-hazard explosions caused approximately 43 per cent of all civilian casualties in 2018. I implore all parties to immediately cease using landmines.

While humanitarians today have slightly more access to civilians in need than a year ago, particularly in areas beyond Government control, humanitarian access is often unpredictable. As the Council will recall, on 6 June 2018 the Council welcomed the work of United Nations agencies (see S/PRST/2018/12) in order to address the tragic humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine and emphasized the need to scale up efforts to alleviate the suffering of civilians affected by the conflict. Unimpeded and sustained access for humanitarian organizations is key.

But, despite access challenges, a complex operating environment and limited funding, humanitarians are making a real difference by providing aid on both sides of the contact line. They continue to be guided by the universally recognized principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. In 2018 alone, humanitarians reached some 1.3 million of the most vulnerable people with critical assistance.

We are establishing an innovative funding mechanism to support the 2019 humanitarian response plan efforts — the Ukraine Humanitarian Pooled Fund — to address acute needs that are least funded. I welcome the contributions made by donors to the Fund. I urge others to join. The Emergency Relief Coordinator

approved a \$6 million allocation last month from the Central Emergency Response Fund, as part of an envelope for underfunded crises.

Over 60 per cent of last year's humanitarian response plan was not funded. As a consequence, some civilians who desperately needed assistance were unable to receive food, water and sanitation, healthcare and medicines, as well as protection services. This year we require \$162 million to provide aid to 2.3 million people through the 2019 humanitarian response plan. The plan focuses on protecting affected people and restoring their access to livelihoods, essential services and critical structures. While humanitarian assistance continues to be critical as a result of conflict, we aim to meet people's needs through more sustainable efforts, linking with recovery and development action where possible.

Civilians along the contact line have suffered the physical and emotional consequences of repeated, often intense, hostilities. Shelling, sniper-fire and landmines have become a daily reality for millions. Let us remember that behind the figures mentioned are families — men, women and children — who have suffered every day for over five years. Many are struggling to access schools, hospitals and other essential services. Many have lost their jobs, homes, family members and friends. We can, and we must, do more for those people.

To the resilient people of Ukraine, I wish to say that we have not forgotten them. We will continue to do everything we can to alleviate their daily suffering, and to call for lasting peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Mueller for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Apakan.

Mr. Apakan: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the security situation in eastern Ukraine. I will provide members with an update on the challenges in the implementation of the Minsk agreements, in particular the package of measures as we mark a year since its signing.

The latest recommitment to the ceasefire began on 29 December. That resulted in a significant decrease in the number of ceasefire violations — a demonstration that, if there is will, violence can be stopped. However, the numbers have again rapidly increased. Violence continues to fluctuate. On 5 February, for instance, the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) recorded almost

2,000 ceasefire violations, while yesterday we recorded approximately 1,300. Areas where violence has been most intense, as before, remain concentrated around the Avdiivka-Yasynuvata-Donetsk airport area, the Popasna-Pervomaisk-Zolote area, areas east and north-east of Mariupol and areas south of Svitlodarsk. Heavy weapons have not been fully withdrawn; they continue to be used.

We are in Minsk, where tomorrow there will be a meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group. I will again emphasize the need for a comprehensive ceasefire at the Working Group on Security Issues. There must be progress in identifying measures to strengthen the ceasefire. The disengagement of forces and hardware, agreed in the framework decision of September 2016, has not occurred. On the contrary, we have observed a re-engagement in the Petrivske and Zolote disengagement areas. Particularly in Zolote, violence is spilling over to nearby villages on both sides of the contact line, resulting in civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure.

Civilians must be protected. Measures that can improve conditions for those living in or close to conflict-affected areas are urgently needed. In 2018 the SMM reported on the circumstances in which 43 civilians were killed and 194 were injured. In the first few weeks of 2019 we recorded four civilian casualties. All measures must be undertaken to prevent further casualties. The full withdrawal of heavy weapons, beginning with populated areas, should be a priority. That would reduce the impact of the conflict on civilians. Concrete, positive steps in the field of humanitarian mine action, particularly around schools, kindergartens and entry-exit checkpoints, are needed. That could help prevent further civilian casualties from mines and unexploded ordnance. Raising awareness of those dangers is important, especially among children.

Civilian infrastructure must be protected. Regrettably, incidents affecting sites of critical infrastructure, such as the Donetsk filtration station and, more recently, the pumping station in Vasylivka, have continued to occur. They cause damage and endanger the lives of the brave men and women who work in those sites for the benefit of their communities. The SMM continues to facilitate dialogue to enable the repair and maintenance of critical civilian infrastructure. It is for the sides to take appropriate action to protect those sites. They must honour the agreed local ceasefires and

arrangements. A failure to do so poses a threat to repair crews and SMM monitors.

To carry on with their lives, thousands of people undertake long journeys every day. They are forced to use the few entry-exit checkpoints to access basic services, receive pensions and visit family members separated by the conflict. We observe the consequences of the enduring hardships, particularly for the elderly, of the long queues in sub-zero temperatures. Since December, the SMM has recorded 14 cases of people who died from natural causes while waiting at checkpoints. Steps must be taken to facilitate access for medical staff to the grey zone between these checkpoints to provide assistance for civilians. Crossing conditions must be improved and more such checkpoints should be opened, in particular in the Luhansk region. In his recent visit to eastern Ukraine, the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Slovak Foreign Minister Lajčák, highlighted the precarious conditions of civilians crossing the damaged bridge at Stanytsia Luhanska. Action is needed to ensure that the necessary repairs to the bridge become possible.

The Mission continues to monitor and report on developments taking place in a complex security environment. SMM unarmed aerial vehicles continue to be targeted and signal interference with their flights persists. More recently, on 4 February an explosion occurred about 100 metres from an SMM patrol. Challenges to our freedom of movement remain, in particular in areas outside Government control in the southern Donetsk region.

It is the responsibility of the sides to make good on their commitments and ensure effective monitoring and verification by the OSCE — a commitment they made in the package of measures. The Mission will continue to support and facilitate the implementation of the Minsk agreements. The SMM will also continue, according to its mandate, to monitor and report on the security situation, facilitate dialogue to reduce tensions and promote stabilization and normalization throughout the country. In that context, we have enhanced our patrolling activities to monitor on land the possible effects on the socioeconomic situation and potential implications related to developments in the Sea of Azov.

I wish to thank the Council once again for the opportunity to share the observations of the OSCE

SMM. I also wish to express my gratitude for the close cooperation with United Nations agencies in Ukraine, both in Kyiv and in the field. In closing, I would like to acknowledge the work of my colleagues, the SMM members, and the dedicated men and women with whom I have the honour to work. I also wish to thank my colleague and friend, Ambassador Sajdik, for his close cooperation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Apakan for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Sajdik.

Mr. Sajdik: Ambassador Apakan and I have today the honour to brief the Council from Minsk on the evening before another negotiation round of the Trilateral Contact Group and the four working groups established by the Minsk agreements will take place. This bears witness to the fact that the Minsk mechanisms function on a regular basis and that there are many different questions to be discussed and problems, also of a current nature, to be solved.

The Trilateral Contact Group unites Russia and Ukraine and the Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), a function presently held — as already mentioned by Ambassador Apakan — by His Excellency Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák of Slovakia, the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. The Minsk platform foresees the participation of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in meetings. Resolution 2202 (2015), of 17 February 2015, in welcoming the declaration adopted by the four leaders of the Normandy format on 12 February 2015, has enshrined oversight by the Normandy four over our Minsk deliberations. The latest meeting of that kind took place in November 2018.

In today's statement on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the signing of the Minsk agreements, I said that

“unfortunately, despite unanimous commitments to the Minsk agreements, a solution to the conflict has not come nearer. In the region, confrontations are still ongoing, causing suffering to the civilian population and losses of human lives, although their number was considerably reduced in the course of last year”.

Having made, together with the Austrian OSCE chairmanship in 2017, the protection of civilians a core cause of our deliberations has — in close cooperation with the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission and international humanitarian organizations — helped reduce the number of civilians casualties by more than half in 2018, with that trend continuing this year.

Because of Ambassador Apakan's able guidance of the security working group — for which I am very grateful — the Trilateral Contact Group could adopt decisions in the security field, as required by the Minsk agreements, namely, the addendum to the package of measures on the withdrawal of heavy weapons, of September 2015; the decisions on mine action and prohibition of live-fire exercises in the vicinity of the contact line, of March 2016; and the framework decision on the disengagement of forces and hardware, of September 2016.

Positive developments could also be achieved in the economic field, especially with respect to water deliveries, respective payments in the Luhansk region and repairs of water infrastructure. Also in 2018, we observed encouraging efforts with regard to maintaining mobile telecommunications across the line of contact, which are especially vital for the elderly receiving their pensions on accounts in Government-controlled territory. Moreover, the prolongation of the special status of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine until the end of this year was an important political achievement of September last year. The special status is a cornerstone of the Minsk agreements.

There have also been setbacks. The conduct of the so-called elections on 11 November 2018 in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions has not helped strengthen the underlying spirit of the Minsk agreements, namely, the unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Important obligations have not been lived up to. No disengagement has taken place so far in Stanytsia Luhanska, which is one of the disengagement zones that the sides had previously agreed on. The access to the bridge on the northern bank of the Seversky Donets River, at the crucial crossing point near Stanytsia Luhanska, remains unrepaired, which has absolutely dire consequences, in particular for the elderly. With rising numbers of people crossing the line of contact — an increase of 20 per cent in 2018 alone, reaching an average of 1.1 million crossings per months, according to figures provided by the

International Organization for Migration — improving the conditions at crossings and opening new entry-exit check points has become very urgent, as has already been mentioned by previous speakers.

Unfortunately, there has been no exchange of conflict-related detainees since the end of 2017. We have also observed a stalemate in the political working group. I encourage the sides to allow the latter, with the help of its tireless coordinator Ambassador Pierre Morel, to widen the scope of its discussions.

I have now worked more than three and a half years with the Minsk process. During that time, I have come to the conclusion that the absolutely full implementation of the Minsk agreements is essential to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. There is simply no alternative.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Sajdik for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would first like to thank Mr. Jenča, Ms. Mueller, Mr. Apakan and Mr. Sajdik for their briefings today.

We took the initiative of convening today's meeting in order to discuss the implementation of a document that is extremely important to the settlement of the internal Ukrainian crisis, the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. It was signed four years ago on 12 February 2015 by representatives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Ukraine, Russia, the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic.

We have every reason to bring up this issue in the United Nations, since as an annex the document is an integral part of resolution 2202 (2015), of 17 February 2015, which endorsed it in its very first paragraph. Furthermore, support for the implementation of the Minsk package was again affirmed in a Security Council presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/12) of 6 June 2018. For some reason some of our colleagues on the Council labour under the illusion — not on this topic alone, but on this topic especially — that we are uncomfortable discussing the subject of Ukraine. That is not only not the case, it is the complete opposite. On the contrary, we have a greater interest than anyone in

ensuring that the world listens one more time to the story of how Western countries first orchestrated an anti-Government coup in Ukraine and then gave Kyiv carte blanche to do absolutely anything on the pretext of dealing with what it calls the Russian threat and aggression.

On 21 February it will be exactly five years since the moment when in the presence of high representatives of the European Union (EU), Germany, Poland and France in the capacity of guarantors, the then President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, signed an agreement with the opposition on a peaceful settlement of the crisis. He was almost immediately deceived and ultimately forced to leave Ukraine. Who knows? Perhaps if he had acted as the current Ukrainian authorities do, or, say, like the leaders of the democratic countries who are not afraid to use force against protesters, Ukraine would not have found itself mired in a deep economic crisis, powerless and lawless, and would not have ended up as a raw-materials farm supplying the EU's markets with cheap labour. Not to mention that he would have had reason on his side. As we now know for certain, the protesters were armed and determined to seize power at any cost, including bloody incitement. And that is ultimately what they did.

I have purposely described this in detail because I want it understood that the West as a whole, and the three pseudo-guarantor countries I mentioned in particular, bear a direct responsibility for everything that has happened and is happening, as does the United States, the true puppet master of these entire Maidan theatrics, which today encourages and covers up every one of Kyiv's provocations, including the recent incident in the Black Sea, and willingly supplies Ukraine with arms, goading it to reckless action. Unfortunately, it is obvious to us that the West has absolutely no interest in Ukraine itself, its future or the welfare of its citizens. Its sole interest is in the country's capacity as a pawn in a geopolitical confrontation with Russia.

Four years ago, it seemed as if the international community and the parties to the Ukrainian conflict were of one mind as to what the formula for a settlement should be. In May 2018, during a Council meeting convened by our Polish colleagues (see S/PV.8270), we went over the Minsk package of measures in the greatest possible detail, and I will therefore not do that today. However, so that Council members could have the document in front of them, we decided to print out and distribute copies of resolution 2202 (2015).

Time after time, I have urged Council members to read it thoroughly. Do not repeat that rote line that Russia should implement the Minsk agreements. The agreements contain not a word about Russia. As we have said many times, the absurdity is that it is Kyiv that is sabotaging the Minsk agreements and it is Moscow they are trying to make pay the price for that.

To reiterate the most important point once again, the arrangement of the steps referred to in the resolution, from paragraphs 1 to 13, is not accidental, since the order of implementation of each step is of key significance. Let me say again that the implementation of paragraph 9, on the transfer to Ukraine of control of the border with Russia in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, will be possible only after all the other conditions have been implemented, including the disengagement of forces and equipment, the enactment of a law on Donbas's special status, the creation of self-governing institutions based on that, amnesty, an exchange of prisoners and a number of other measures.

Unfortunately, however, we have full grounds for saying that Kyiv has consistently and knowingly failed to implement the Minsk agreements and has sabotaged them, while our Western partners have covered up all of its unlawful actions. The best illustration of that is the fact that on 5 February the office of Ukraine's Prosecutor General announced the start of criminal proceedings against Viktor Medvedchuk, one of the leaders of the Ukrainian opposition, who had declared his candidacy for the presidential elections to be held on 31 March. The reason for the indictment was his call for holding the direct dialogue between Kyiv and Donbas provided for in the Minsk package of measures and for granting the region special status within Ukraine. In other words, implementing the Minsk agreements in Ukraine today is tantamount to treason and subject to criminal prosecution.

The Minsk agreements' insistence on a direct dialogue with the Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republics brings Kyiv out in an allergic reaction. But our Western colleagues pretend not to notice, thereby displaying their carefully cultivated double standards. And they are double standards because in every other conflict on the Security Council's agenda, we are all united in insisting that the opposing parties have to sit down at the negotiating table with the goal of ending their confrontation or their military action and launching a political process.

Take Syria. What is the proverbial main thrust of our efforts there? Correct. It is creating a constitutional committee with the participation of the Government and opposition and arriving at an agreement on the establishment of a Syrian-owned and -led political process. Now take Yemen. Everyone here applauded the Stockholm Agreement reached between the Yemeni Government and Ansar Allah. And now we are all nervously keeping our fingers crossed and praying that this still fragile agreement can be implemented. We all welcomed the Khartoum agreement on the Central African Republic, whose aim was also reconciling some hitherto irreconcilable parties.

The goal of any peace process, and no one will disagree with me, is to reach a political rather than a military solution to a conflict through direct talks between the conflicting parties. So why should Ukraine be any different? Why do our Western colleagues not make sure that Kyiv will finally agree to sit down at the negotiating table with direct representatives of this confrontation instead of trotting out the same worn-out clichés about how Russia should do this, and this, and this? But please do not bother. I can answer that question myself, especially since no one else here cares to try.

This is happening because the Kyiv authorities' disingenuous chosen paradigm — "This is not a civil conflict. It is a war with Russia" — suits them. And one can chalk up a great deal to war, and that is what Ukraine's President Poroshenko is doing. It turns out that all of Ukraine's woes and misfortunes — not just of the past few years but the past three centuries — are the legacy of Russia's occupation of Ukraine. Under that lying paradigm, a new, falsified version of history is being created at accelerated speed, cobbled together from all the skeletons in its cupboard. Based on this paradigm, the Kyiv authorities have to agree to nothing. After all, according to them, the other party to the conflict is not their own citizens but an aggressor country, and therefore the Minsk agreements can be torn up and thrown in the trash too. And that is exactly what the Ukrainian authorities have done.

As a result of this fictional paradigm, there is no need for Ukraine to talk to those of its citizens who live in Donetsk and Luhansk. And yet for some reason the residents of Donetsk and Luhansk have not observed the presence among them of this so-called aggressor. They have not protested against their de facto authorities and they are not begging Kyiv to save them. However, Kyiv

has been able to continue to shed crocodile tears for its citizens while groundlessly christening them terrorists. But you do not negotiate with terrorists, you destroy them. And there we have the Kyiv authorities' entire primitive construct — primitive, but effective. And it is effective because our Western colleagues are complicit in it. And that is shameful.

The situation in south-eastern Ukraine remains explosive. Kyiv has not respected the ceasefire agreement and has moved deep into the grey zone, as President Poroshenko's adviser Yuriy Biryukov recently confirmed. Things have reached a point where the positions of the parties in some areas are dangerously close. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission's recent reports have confirmed the arrival in Donbas of new units with Ukrainian tanks and artillery. Kyiv has also been persistently evading its political commitments, trying to marginalize the mechanisms of the Trilateral Contact Group and launch a second round of discussions on issues that have already been agreed on. That have been indulged in that by our Western partners, saying, for example, as Kurt Volker has done, that there is no place in the Minsk agreements for the proclaimed republics of Donbas and that they should disappear, while President Poroshenko has declared that the Minsk format does not exist. What kind of reaction to such rhetoric does the Council expect from Donbas?

The result of the total indulgence with which Western Governments have met any action by Kyiv has been the creation of a continuing atmosphere of lawlessness in which extremism and rabid nationalism flourish, hatred of Russia is kindled and dissent is brutally suppressed. Kyiv's unwillingness to adhere strictly to OSCE standards has become increasingly obvious over the past few years. Everyone in this Chamber has been trying to ignore that, partly because it is genuinely difficult to find one's way in the labyrinth of Ukraine's surrealistic internal politics without a translation or first-hand information, and has continued to trot out the tired clichés about democratic choice and the right to a bright future in the family of democratic nations, while occasionally gently scolding Kyiv for its lack of progress in instituting reforms and fighting corruption. But what they are really doing is knowingly ignoring all the flagrant violations of democratic — indeed, merely civilized — norms and the bacchanalia of lawlessness, lies and emerging neo-Nazism in Ukraine.

Only the other day the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) received an

official refusal from the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry for accreditation for Russia's observers during the March presidential elections, while Arsen Avakov, the Minister of Internal Affairs, has promised to vet all international observers, not just Russians, using the database of the extremist Myrotvorets website, which is banned in some countries. For those who do not know about it, I should explain that this site contains personal information about people whom Kyiv nationalists do not like, in violation of rules on the protection of personal information. Some of them have already been killed. That amounts to giving people the black spot or putting them on a hit list. And if anyone imagines that only Russians are on those lists I can inform them that they include personal information about politicians from Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. These kinds of steps on the part of Kyiv are yet another gross violation of its international commitments and a serious assault on ODIHR, which is supposed to be the gold standard for monitoring elections. This is also the place to mention that the Maidan authorities' decision not to open polling stations in Russia has deprived millions of Ukrainians of the opportunity to vote there, which calls into question the upcoming elections' transparency and objectivity.

Of course, the people of Donbas — almost 4 million of them, or roughly 10 per cent of Ukraine's total population of 42.3 million — will have no chance of voting either. Who would those Ukrainian citizens vote — or rather never vote — for? Because they are certainly not needed by the current Kyiv authorities, weeping their hypocritical tears for them. For Kyiv they long ago became self-supporting pawns in its unscrupulous political games. Incidentally, we should point out that in its obvious concern for its citizens, Kyiv has imposed an economic, transportation, energy and social blockade on Donbas.

I would like to hear something from Kyiv's Western mentors in this Chamber about their basic assessment of Ukraine's democratic development. Of course, it should also include the situation of religious freedom in Ukraine, where Orthodox churches are being openly seized with the direct assistance of the legislative and executive authorities. Amid the heat of the pre-election campaigns, the Ukrainian authorities have completely forgotten the separation between Church and State that exists in civilized countries and that this principle is guaranteed in Ukraine's Constitution. And yet the current authorities are shamelessly playing the religion

card, tearing believers apart and flagrantly trampling on religious freedom.

In conclusion, I would like to once again make it abundantly clear that the key obstacle to resolving the crisis and normalizing ordinary people's lives is the lack of a clear response from Western countries to Kyiv's unwillingness to implement the package of measures that has been there for four years now. Essentially, this means the sabotage of resolution 2202 (2015). As a result, Kyiv is venturing new provocations that threaten only to worsen the situation and ruin the peace process. We hope and would like to believe that the participants in today's meeting will urge the Ukrainian authorities to scrupulously implement their international commitments. Kyiv must finally understand that the implementation of the Minsk package of measures is the only chance for peace and for resolving the conflict in Ukraine.

And one more thing. We want to warn everyone, both Kyiv and its sponsors, that they should forget about hopes for a plan B, especially if anyone entertains any illusions about military means for resolving this intra-Ukrainian conflict.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): Listening to Ambassador Nebenzia, I was left with the impression that it was Ukraine that had invaded Russia, not Russia that invaded Ukraine.

At the outset, I would like to thank all the briefers — Mr. Jenča, Ms. Mueller, Ambassador Apakan and Ambassador Sajdik. I would particularly like to thank Mr. Apakan for his five years or more of work with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. What the monitors have accomplished in extremely difficult circumstances over those years is incredible. I would also like to thank Mr. Sajdik, who once again expressed his commitment to the Minsk process, the Trilateral Contact Group and the working groups.

I would like to remind Mr. Nebenzia that direct meetings are actually taking place in those working groups, and that is where the discussions with the different parties to the conflict are being held, or should be. When I heard that our Russian friends had put this subject on the agenda, I did not feel uncomfortable either, in fact quite the contrary. Exactly four years after the signing of the Minsk agreements, I believe it is quite right that we should discuss the situation. But that is not the only anniversary of note right now. In

particular, this year we are marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Budapest Memorandum. For those who do not know what that is, it was signed in 1994. At the time Ukraine still had nuclear weapons, and it gave them up in exchange for Russia's guarantee of its territorial integrity and sovereignty. We have seen what has happened since then with regard to its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and what that means for disarmament worldwide and for the rules-based international order and international law.

Our Russian partners continue to violate international law. The Treaty between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on Cooperation in the Use of the Sea of Azov is the most recent text in which it is clear that the freedom of navigation is guaranteed. Ukrainian soldiers — marines — who relied on the freedom of navigation in the Sea of Azov, are imprisoned to this day, which is a violation of international law. Over the years, our Russian friends have said — and Vassily has said — that it was an internal coup to overthrow the Government. However, we must be aware of the fact that it was a Russian invasion. Russian soldiers were directly involved, both in the occupation of Luhansk and of Donetsk.

There is a Russian television documentary that clearly states that, on 23 February 2014, President Putin ordered the security services to retake Crimea. Crimea is still occupied. Donbas is still occupied — by “little green men” — and its fate lies in their hands: Russian soldiers. In 2014 and 2015, when it became increasingly clear that many Russian soldiers had been killed, there was a great deal of criticism on social media in Russia. Then, in August 2014, Russia banned the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of St. Petersburg and declared it a foreign agent. There were many complaints about Russian soldiers engaged in Donbas. Subsequently, in a decree issued in May 2015, President Putin banned reports about the death of members of the Defence Ministry in peace time. That is how the situation was handled in Russia.

Let us now turn to Minsk and the historical circumstances. I do not know if it is a privilege, but I was in Minsk and in negotiations for approximately 16 hours. There were several items on the agenda. I will recap some of them. The key element at that stage was the issue of the ceasefire. Russian troops were advancing in Donbas at that time. They went beyond the lines stipulated in the previous Minsk agreement and attempted to occupy the city of

Debaltseve, which is a cross point for roads and trains and of strategic importance. The main discussion was focused on when the ceasefire would take place. The Russian army wanted to have it as late as possible. The members of the Normandy format, in particular the non-Russians, insisted on an early ceasefire. In the end, the ceasefire was agreed on the morning of 12 February 2015, following some back and forth between Mr. Zakharchenko and Mr. Plotnitsky, who signed the agreement. It was set to start on 15 February at midnight. I agree with Vassily's logic: you have to see the package of measures in sequence.

The first paragraph stipulates an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire as of 15 February 2015. The ceasefire never happened, because the Russian military was actually right and they were unable to reach Debaltseve at the time stipulated in the agreement. It took them several days to arrive. Instead of having a ceasefire, Russian troops continued until they finally occupied Debaltseve. And that is, in a way, the original sin committed when it comes to the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Together with my French colleague at the time, I visited Ukraine several times. We went to the Rada and spoke with the members of Parliament about adopting laws and so on. The scepticism was very palpable. There was no trust that Russia would do its part after having committed the original sin of not honouring the ceasefire. We have seen no withdrawal of heavy weapons to date. Ambassador Apakan also highlighted that, with regard to the section of the Minsk package pertaining free access to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, it is in particular in the occupied territory of Ukraine where the Monitoring Mission does not have free access. Russian-supported elections on 11 November last year again demonstrated that Russia is not ready to adhere to the Minsk package.

There is distrust in Ukraine but, nevertheless, the Rada adopted a number of important of very important elements of the Minsk agreements. There was a first reading of the constitutional amendments on decentralization. The law on the special status and the amnesty law were adopted. They are all key elements. It was extremely difficult to convince the members of the Rada and receive the necessary support.

Germany, together with France, will continue to be active and to support in the Normandy format all efforts to broker a ceasefire and reach a solution. We are also ready to support the idea of a United Nations mission,

which was discussed. The mandate for it was proposed by Russia and states that United Nations peacekeepers should protect the Special Monitoring Mission. I think that is a joke; for it to have free access and be able to move around freely would require just one phone call from the Russian President. We are ready for the United Nations, but it has to have a serious mission.

Let me briefly turn to the worst outcome of what happened in Ukraine — the humanitarian situation in Crimea and Donbas. Ursula Mueller painted a terrible picture of what is happening there: many dead, injured, sick and impoverished and families separated; industry more or less destroyed; mines flooded and huge environmental risks. I think what should be done now is to consider the humanitarian issues. I do not understand why it is not possible to have an agreement between Ukraine and Russia on the Stanytsia Luhanska pedestrian bridge, which was mentioned by all of the briefers. There are reports about the situation there and how old people have to cross it. I would ask the Ukrainian Ambassador, in view of his statement, to make a commitment that everything will be done to ensure that the bridge again becomes operational. The exchange of prisoners and hostages, which was possible at the end of 2017 with 300 people, should be possible now. The essential infrastructure should be spared and repaired, as mentioned previously.

The Minsk agreements have been severely criticized and there is every reason for such criticism because the original sin occurred in their implementation. Nonetheless, it is the only show in town. The Normandy format remains committed to the agreements and we want them to be successful. We are therefore ready to work on the issue, not least for the benefit of the people who are suffering terribly.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča and Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller for their briefings. I would also like to welcome my former colleagues, Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan and Ambassador Martin Sajdik, and to thank them for their insightful briefings on the implementation of resolution 2202 (2015), the Minsk agreements and the situation in eastern Ukraine.

The United Nations was established in order to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Its fundamental role is to prevent conflict. Pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council has

the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. The Council takes the initiative to identify threats to peace and security and calls on States parties to a conflict to settle their differences through peaceful means in order to prevent an armed conflict.

This meeting falls on the fourth anniversary of the Minsk agreements, which provide a road map to settle the conflict in Ukraine. On this occasion, we would have hoped to achieve lasting peace. However, there continue to be violations of the ceasefire with weapons that should have been withdrawn under the agreements. Those weapons are still present in an environment characterized by insecurity and a lack of trust, leading to more acts of violence. We therefore call on all parties to immediately cease hostilities and commit themselves to fully respecting the ceasefire and refraining from provocations that could lead to more tension.

We renew our support for the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, as well as non-interference in its internal affairs. We hope that all parties concerned will fully implement resolution 2202 (2015), the Minsk agreements and presidential statement S/PRST/2018/12 of 6 June 2018. We call on those parties to achieve a comprehensive and balanced solution to this issue through dialogue, as stipulated in Article 33 of the United Nations Charter, and within the framework of the Normandy format as well as the Trilateral Contact Group in order to achieve immediate progress in all the agreed areas.

We commend the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and its efforts on the ground, in particular its endeavours towards facilitating a dialogue among the parties to the conflict. We call on Ukraine and the Russian Federation to activate a dialogue between them and take confidence-building measures to show greater political will not only to strengthen the ceasefire arrangements and implement previous agreements, but also to revitalize a lasting and comprehensive negotiation process towards a peaceful solution to the crisis.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, the crisis in the eastern part of Ukraine is now in its fifth year. The consequences are becoming increasingly serious owing to the daily hostilities, which have an impact on the infrastructure and undermine the daily life of the people in the region. The conflict also affects more than

5.2 million people, of whom 3.5 million people are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and protection, as mentioned by Ms. Mueller. In addition, there are 1.5 million internally displaced persons, according to the report of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of 31 December 2018.

The humanitarian situation remains precarious due to many obstacles impeding relief work and lack of funding for the humanitarian response plan. The situation in eastern Ukraine is still unstable despite some improvements. We stress the importance of providing humanitarian assistance to all the affected areas in order to improve the living conditions of the population there.

In conclusion, we urgently call for a peaceful solution to the crisis in the eastern part of Ukraine in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the agreements signed by the parties involved. That includes the Minsk agreements, which represent the only agreed framework to settle the crisis in the region, along with the mediation efforts of the stakeholders who enjoy the respect and appreciation of the two parties to the conflict and the international community as a whole.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller, Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan and Ambassador Martin Sajdik for their comprehensive briefings, especially given the short notice for this meeting.

We always underline the need for full implementation of the Minsk agreements by all the signatories involved. However, it must be remembered who the victim is and who the aggressor is in this case. Despite what we may hear today, much ill will would be required to suggest that it is the country that has fallen prey to Russia's aggressive foreign policy that is failing to comply with the Minsk agreements. It is Russia that allowed the illegal elections conducted last November in the so-called separatist regions in Donbas that constitute a gross violation of the Minsk agreements. The tactic is plain and simple: one will significantly reduce the number of violations reported by the observers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) if access to the separatist-controlled parts of Ukraine in Donbas remains restricted. That has been the reality on the ground. To truly de-escalate the situation in Donbas, we need more effective OSCE engagement,

in particular, the unhindered implementation of the mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. The OSCE must be allowed to permanently monitor the Ukrainian-Russian State border.

Russian aggression against Ukraine remains a security threat to the whole region. As we have already stated in the Council on several occasions, the conflict in and around Ukraine is not a domestic Ukrainian crisis. It is a consequence of the Russian aggression against a sovereign neighbouring State and, as often depicted by the aggressor, a brotherly nation. That aggression undermines the core principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Poland fully supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, including its maritime areas.

We are seriously concerned by Russia's unjustified use of military force against Ukrainian ships and naval personnel on 25 November, which took place against the backdrop of increasing militarization in the area. We call on Russia to ensure unhindered access to Ukrainian ports and navigational rights in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait. Furthermore, we call for the immediate and unconditional release of the Ukrainian vessels and their crew members.

Russia must stop destabilizing the socioeconomic situation in eastern Ukraine through unjustified discriminatory inspections of vessels bound for and originating in the ports of Berdyansk and Mariupol.

Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, an integral part of Ukraine, is a glaring example of the violation of the principles of international law. That was true on 16 March 2014, when the illegal referendum deciding the status of Crimea was held and it continues to be true today. Russia's claims of sovereignty or sovereign rights in maritime areas belonging to the Crimean peninsula have no legal basis whatsoever. Ukraine's decision to institute arbitration proceedings against Russia under the United National Convention on the Law of the Sea is a step that will hopefully lead to a peaceful resolution of its disputes with Russia.

While we are always grateful for the picture of the humanitarian situation provided by Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller, we see the need to take immediate action to ease the difficult humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine. First, it requires Russia to allow international humanitarian organizations to operate freely in the areas of Donbas controlled by militants. The humanitarian situation

in the conflict areas is very difficult. Thanks to the data provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, we are aware that humanitarian aid and protection need to be provided to approximately 3.5 million people. The civilian infrastructure is also being targeted and intentionally destroyed. The Russia-backed forces refuse to make basic improvements to the crossing facilities at the entry-exit checkpoints along the contact line, where thousands of civilians wait for hours in order to meet their basic needs such as seeing family members, and to collect medicine and food. The Special Monitoring Mission is reporting a threefold increase in deaths by natural causes at checkpoints in comparison to the previous year. In mid-December last year, when the temperature was below freezing, local pipelines in Donetsk were shelled and damaged, resulting in a water supply disruption for about 43,000 Toretsk inhabitants, including about 5,000 children in 21 educational facilities. Water supplies were resumed after five days when the parties to the conflict agreed to hold fire on the water supply infrastructure for the repair of damaged pipelines. Moreover, despite the safety guarantees, the water workers found themselves under heavy fire on 25 December. That is simply unacceptable.

Apart from supporting Ukraine at the political level, since 2014 Poland has been providing the necessary humanitarian aid to internally displaced people from areas affected by armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, as well as to the most vulnerable local population. Ukraine is a priority State for Poland's development assistance and will remain one as long as our partners recognize the need for it.

In conclusion on a positive note, we recognize the latest amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine introducing its European and Euro-Atlantic integration perspective. Broad support is reflected both in the Ukrainian Parliament and on the Ukrainian streets. Despite all the uncertainties that will arise at some point, we are sure that a lot can be built on that support. We stand shoulder to shoulder with our friends to overcome any obstacles.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I thank Assistant Secretaries-General Jenča and Mueller and Ambassadors Apakan and Sajdik for their briefings and for their calls for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

We are nearing to the five-year anniversary of the start of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which has left more than 10,400 dead and 1.6 million displaced, as well as 3.5 million more in dire need of assistance. Let us be clear. It is Russia that must end this conflict. Withdrawing its military troops from eastern Ukraine and Crimea is the only acceptable outcome, and the only one we should accept. The United States underscores its unequivocal position on Ukraine. We do not, and will not, recognize the Kremlin's purported annexation of Crimea. We will never accept anything less than the full restoration of Ukraine's control over its own territory, whether in eastern Ukraine or Crimea, including its territorial waters. Our Donbas-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia fully implements the Minsk agreements. Our Crimea-related sanctions will also continue until Russia returns the peninsula to Ukrainian control.

Russia called today's meeting to discuss the Minsk agreements. This is ironic given that Russia has clearly failed to honour and implement them. The Minsk agreements call for the sides, among other things, to implement a ceasefire, allow the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to monitor that ceasefire and withdraw support for "all military armed formations". Russia is clearly violating all three of those key elements. Russia continues to arm, train, lead and fight alongside its proxy forces in eastern Ukraine, in direct contravention of its commitments under the Minsk agreements, including establishing an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire. Russia has flouted its commitments from the very beginning of the establishment of the agreements, using the military forces under its control to capture new territory. While Russia has ignored or undermined the Minsk agreements, Ukraine, France, Germany and the United States remain committed to supporting their full implementation.

We welcome the Ukrainian Government's continued commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict and the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. Ukraine has demonstrated that commitment by taking steps, including by extending the law on the special status for Russia-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine. For its part, instead of using the Minsk agreements as the path towards the resolution of the conflict, Russia reverts to distracting attention from its unmistakable and unjustifiable central role in fomenting it. Moscow disingenuously argues for a protection force that would

use expensive international forces to cement the status quo and end up protecting Russia's proxies.

In a serious escalation — and another violation of international law — in November Russia prevented Ukrainian vessels from passing through the Kerch Strait, firing upon and seizing the vessels and personnel. We again call on Russia to release the detainees, return the Ukrainian ships and end its restrictions on international shipping transiting to Ukrainian ports in the Sea of Azov.

The United States stands with the European Union and its member States, and many other countries, against Russia for its unacceptable conduct in Crimea, eastern Ukraine and the Black Sea. We will continue to stand with the people of Ukraine against Russian aggression. In the name of international peace and security, which members of the Council are committed to uphold, we call on Russia to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, extending to its territorial waters.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): I would like to begin by thanking Equatorial Guinea for convening this very important meeting. I would also like to thank Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; Ambassador Mr. Ertuğrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine; Ambassador Martin Sajdik, Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine; as well as Mr. Miroslav Jenča from the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations for their statements. All of the briefers have provided us with a picture of the situation. For our part, I would like to highlight the following points.

First, Indonesia reaffirms its principle and consistent position that respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, including the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, is a fundamental principle of relations among nations.

Secondly, Indonesia calls upon the conflicting parties to fully adhere to and implement the Minsk agreements in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Doing so could provide a crucial boost of confidence that ultimately paves the way for a sustained political solution and

the restoration of peace and stability in the affected areas. Furthermore, the faithful implementation of the Minsk agreements is also vital to ensuring safe access to and the delivery, storage and distribution of humanitarian assistance to those in need, on the basis of an international mechanism. While underlining the imperative for sustained peaceful actions, Indonesia encourages the withdrawal of all heavy weapons by the States concerned by equal distances in order to create a security zone. We take note of the work undertaken by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Trilateral Contact Group in the implementation of the agreements. We also encourage the assurance of effective monitoring and verification by the OSCE for the ceasefire regime and the withdrawal of heavy weapons.

Thirdly, Indonesia reiterates its call on all the parties concerned to exercise the utmost restraint, manage the crisis responsibly, promote a peaceful settlement and consistently uphold respect for international law. We stress the importance of dialogue and diplomacy among the States concerned to resolve the ongoing problems. In doing so, Indonesia encourages the States concerned to take the necessary measures to de-escalate tensions. We are against any actions that exacerbate hostilities and deteriorate the already fragile situation on the ground. We might come from afar and from a different geographical region, but we believe sincerely in the value of dialogue and the need to settle disputes amicably. Therefore, Indonesia further calls on the Security Council to fully shoulder its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

For its part, Indonesia will fully support all constructive efforts that are aimed at resolving the conflict in Ukraine peacefully, in accordance with international law and Charter principles.

Let me also end by reiterating that full respect for non-interference in and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States are fundamental principles of relations among nations and that each State Member of the United Nations must abide by them, be it on this issue or on others on the agenda of the Security Council.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China has listened to the briefings by Assistant Secretary-General Jenča; Assistant Secretary-General Mueller; the Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring

Mission to Ukraine, Ambassador Apakan; and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Representative to the Trilateral Contact Group Ambassador Sajdik.

Four years ago, the Minsk agreement was signed and subsequently endorsed by the Security Council. The agreement has played a critical role in the political mediation of the Ukrainian crisis. Over the past four years, all parties have held the agreement in high regard, and various mechanisms relating to the implementation of the agreement have largely been functioning well.

Regrettably, however, many of the provisions of the agreement are yet to be fully and effectively implemented. The political mediation process of the Ukrainian crisis has come to a standstill, and there is no effective guarantee of the safety of civilian lives and property in the conflict area. China calls on all parties concerned to effectively implement the agreement, remain committed to the general direction of a political settlement and seek a comprehensive solution through dialogue and consultation in order to facilitate the achievement of peace, stability and development in Ukraine.

A fundamental, long-term solution of the Ukrainian issue requires that on the one hand the legitimate rights, interests and aspirations of all regions and ethnic groups in Ukraine be fully accommodated, and that, on the other hand, attention also be paid to addressing the reasonable concerns of all parties involved in order to achieve a balance among all interests.

China has consistently maintained an objective and impartial position on the Ukrainian crisis. We have always believed that the crisis cannot be solved through force and that dialogue and negotiation is the only way out. China will remain committed to playing a constructive role in the political settlement of the crisis.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): I thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting and facilitating these discussions, as per the Russian Federation letter dated 13 April 2014 (S/2014/264).

I wish to thank the briefers, Mr. Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Peace Operations; Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator; Mr. Ertuğrul Apakan,

Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine; and Mr. Martin Sajdik, Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group. I welcome also my colleague the Permanent Representative of Ukraine.

It is very clear from the briefings we have heard that there remains an urgent need for the immediate cessation of hostilities in eastern Ukraine. The continued violation of the ceasefire, including the presence of heavy weapons and their use, in violation of the Minsk agreements, are of serious concern. It is also of great concern that the ongoing tension and conflict are exacerbating the dire humanitarian conditions on the ground. The parties need to ensure that there is an urgent de-escalation of tension through the implementation of the Minsk agreements so as to allow for a situation that is conducive to the alleviation of the humanitarian crisis.

In this regard, it remains necessary for all parties to fully implement all of their respective commitments under the Minsk agreements. At this point, the Minsk agreements, including the package of measures agreed under Minsk II, provide the most promising road map for peace. It is also of critical importance that the parties refrain from actions that could be viewed as provocative and that could further impede a peaceful resolution of the situation in line with the Minsk agreements.

Furthermore, it is important that the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe be allowed unhindered access to monitor and verify compliance with the Minsk agreements, in line with its mandate. South Africa encourages the various parties to strengthen all political efforts to produce a sustainable and peaceful solution.

In conclusion, we listened very carefully to the remarks made by some of our colleagues on the issue of Ukraine. We hope that those very same colleagues will walk the talk on Venezuela: respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Venezuela; respect for Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations, on refraining from military aggression against other States Members of the United Nations; and, thirdly, not to undermine the Venezuelan economy by holding large sums of Venezuelan funds in their own

banks and in their allies' banks. If they do that, they will win our respect.

Mr. Duclos (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the convening of this meeting, which marks four years since the signing of the Minsk agreements. We thank the Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Miroslav Jenča, for his informative briefing. His words remind us that this anniversary, far from being a date to celebrate, must motivate the parties to renew their commitment to implementing the agreements. We would also like to express our appreciation for the participation of Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller and Ambassadors Ertuğrul Apakan and Martin Sajdik, representatives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Peru believes that the Minsk agreements constitute the legal basis for achieving a political solution to put an end to the conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine. In that regard, we support the package of measures for their full implementation, which the Council backed in February 2015. We encourage the stakeholders involved to uphold fully these commitments.

In this regard, and in line with the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes, we wish to welcome the efforts made under the Normandy format and in the Trilateral Contact Group to facilitate dialogue between the parties and to contribute to restoring peace in Ukraine and regional stability.

We deem vital adherence to the ceasefire agreed on by the parties and backed by the Council, as is the withdrawal of heavy artillery, which is very often located near populated areas. In this regard, we acknowledge the critical role played by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission, which its representatives have recalled here today. It is alarming that in January alone the mission registered more than 16,000 ceasefire violations, many with weapons that should have been withdrawn and that are prohibited under international law, such as anti-personnel mines.

We are also concerned about the serious consequences of that situation for the country's governance and development, notably the devastating impact on its civilian population, especially those living on either side of the line of contact. In just five years, the conflict has claimed the lives of more than 3,300 civilians and injured more than 9,000 people. Another 4.4 million people, including 1.6 million internally

displaced persons, have had to leave their homes and are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. We therefore reiterate the need to ensure that this aid is delivered unhindered and under international supervision.

In that regard, we commend the work of the international community, and of the United Nations in particular, in supporting the efforts of the Ukrainian authorities to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population affected by the conflict. Similarly, we echo the call for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to provide assistance to the 2.3 million people living in extremely vulnerable conditions.

In reiterating our commitment to the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, in line with the Charter of the United Nations and the Minsk agreements, we underscore the importance of restoring the control of the Ukrainian Government over the entire conflict zone, and as a result, resume the essential social and economic ties aimed at ensuring the well-being of its people.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Miroslav Jenča; the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Ursula Mueller; the Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Mr. Ertuğrul Apakan; and the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group, Mr. Martin Sajdik, for their insightful briefings on the crisis that Ukraine has endured for almost five years.

While some may forget it, the Ukrainian conflict remains one of the deadliest on the European continent today. A few striking figures are worth recalling. A total of 12,800 people have died since April 2014 in the Donbas, including 3,300 civilians. Despite commitments to respecting the ceasefire, the situation on the line of contact remains as tense as ever. The OSCE Mission identified more than 30 victims in January alone. Let us not forget that Ukraine is now the third most mined area in the world, after Iraq and Afghanistan, and that it will take several decades to clear it.

As my German colleague and friend said, since the onset of hostilities France and Germany, in conjunction with the OSCE, have spared no effort in the so-called Normandy format to bring the parties closer together, facilitate the full implementation of the Minsk

agreements by the latter and contribute thereby to ending the conflict. In order to achieve that objective, three points deserve our full attention.

First, much remains to be done to implement the commitments that were made several years ago to improve security conditions, which include respecting the ceasefire; withdrawing heavy weapons from the line of contact; disengaging from three pilot areas that were identified by the September 2016 framework agreement; clearing mines, on which no significant progress has been noted; and lastly, protecting critical civilian infrastructure and its workers. We regret the lack of political will to implement commitments that were made at the highest level.

Beyond the Donbas, France reiterates its concern about Russia's illegal use of military force in the Kerch Strait. Equally worrying are the excessive inspections that have been carried out by the Russian coast guard in the Sea of Azov since last spring. Following the serious naval incident in November, there is a greater need than ever for commercial and military ships to enjoy safe, free and unhindered passage, and for the 24 illegally detained Ukrainian seamen to be released immediately and without condition.

Secondly, in the context of open conflict in eastern Ukraine and tensions related to the illegal annexation of Crimea, the civilian population is on the front line. Ukraine is facing one of the largest humanitarian crises of the past 10 years. In total, as mentioned by Assistant Secretary-General Mueller, 3.5 million women and men, particularly the most vulnerable older persons — representing nearly 10 per cent of the population— depend on humanitarian assistance.

France once again calls on the parties to facilitate the crossing of the line of contact by civilian populations and spare them the suffering associated with waiting in inhuman conditions, especially given the opening of new crossing points. We must not forget that more than 10 people have died in recent weeks due to the extremely harsh crossing and waiting conditions on both sides of the line of contact. Similarly, every effort must be made to ensure safe and unhindered access for humanitarian organizations and United Nations agencies, particularly in the territory controlled by separatist entities.

On 6 June 2018, in presidential statement S/PRST/2018/12, the Security Council called for the United Nations to take action to respond appropriately to the humanitarian crisis. In that regard, we welcome

the humanitarian response plan for 2019-2020, prepared by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as well as the upcoming launch of a common finance fund for Ukraine. That initiative is a step towards greater awareness, and we fully support it.

Thirdly and in conclusion, an end to the crisis is first and foremost the responsibility of the parties, especially Russia. We encourage them to stop posturing and to implement all their obligations under the Minsk agreements, in the interest of a civilian population that is caught between heavy weapons and mines. Contrary to what we heard some minutes ago, the actual conflict is not the product of a so-called Western plot. Sitting around this table there is an aggressor country and a country that is subject to that aggression. The OSCE Mission, the outstanding work of which we commend, plays a central role in achieving that objective and resolving the crisis. We urge the parties, in particular the separatist entities, to allow observers to move freely throughout Ukraine to the Russian-Ukrainian border.

Pending the return to a lasting peace, to which we are striving tirelessly to contribute, the Ukrainian people can count on the full and complete support of France.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I would like to thank all of our briefers. The Russian Ambassador spoke at length and in colourful and imaginative language about many other actors as he introduced the topic, but he said nothing about Russia's role. The German Ambassador — an eyewitness to the Minsk agreements — showed us why, with his account of the events of the time and Russia's actions.

The United Kingdom welcomes this opportunity to discuss the repeated violations of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity at the hands of Russia. Russia's aggression towards Ukraine is not limited to the Donbas and Crimea. Russia seeks to undercut Ukraine at every opportunity, undermining the ceasefire, supplying the Russian-backed separatists with weapons and calling illegitimate elections — all in breach of the Minsk agreements. Those actions have a tragic impact on the lives of Ukrainian civilians. As the French Ambassador said, in the five years since this conflict began, more than 12,800 people have lost their lives. Almost 25,000 have been injured, and 3.4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. Russia bears a heavy responsibility for the ongoing loss of life.

Despite the parties' recommitment to the ceasefire on 29 December 2018, violations are increasing and there continues to be military activity in the disengagement zones. However, our understanding of the situation within non-Government-controlled territory is limited because the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is unable to carry out its mandate. It is unable to do so because of Russia's repeated refusal to support the Special Monitoring Mission. That threatens the ceasefire and ultimately the security of Ukraine and the wider region. The raft of incidents that Russia has yet to provide an explanation for only reinforces that conclusion — for example, the downing of an SMM long-range unmanned aircraft near the Ukraine-Russia border, outside Ukraine Government control last year. Just last week, the SMM twice observed the use of the Russian electronic jamming system Zhitel in the Donbas. I would ask the Russian Ambassador to ensure his country's support for the Special Monitoring Mission and to allow its personnel to observe. I would ask what people have to hide.

A further example of Russian attempts to destabilize Ukraine is the illegitimate elections in the non-Government-controlled territories of the so-called Luhansk People's Republic and Donetsk People's Republic in the Donbas in November 2018. That represents a clear breach of the Minsk agreements and unnecessarily increases tensions. Russia could use its considerable influence on the Russian-backed separatists to encourage them to comply with their Minsk commitments. Instead, Russia fuels the conflict by supplying weapons and personnel to the armed formations.

Next month marks the fifth anniversary of the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia, and it is worth reminding ourselves of the facts. In response to Russia's plans for an illegal and illegitimate referendum in Crimea, on 15 March 2014 the Security Council voted on draft resolution S/2014/189, which reaffirmed the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and noted that Ukraine had not authorized the referendum and that it had no validity. Russia vetoed that draft resolution. Following the illegal and illegitimate referendum in Crimea on 16 March 2014, on 27 March 2014 the General Assembly adopted resolution 68/262, which was supported by 100 member States and affirmed the General Assembly's commitment to the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally

recognized borders and underscored the invalidity of the referendum.

We object to the illegal annexation of Crimea not only because it is illegal. We also object to it owing to the Russian Government's appalling treatment of many of those who live there. Human rights violations are prevalent. Ethnic and religious groups such as the Crimean Tatars are persecuted. Despite calls in the relevant General Assembly resolutions for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit Crimea, Russia continues to refuse. We, the international community, must stand united and call on Russia to release all political prisoners and allow urgently needed, unrestricted access for human rights monitoring organizations immediately. Again, what does the Russian Federation not want the world to see?

Less than three months ago, the Russian authorities admitted to using force in the Black Sea to seize three Ukrainian naval vessels, injuring three Ukrainian servicemen. Those actions are not in conformity with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and they are a blatant attempt to destabilize Ukraine by harming the economic activities of the other ports of Berdyansk and Mariupol, hampering Ukraine's ability to manage its economy.

Let me be clear. Russia's actions in Ukraine have no basis in international law. We cannot and will not ignore such actions. They represent a serious challenge to the international rules-based order. This is an order that benefits us all and keeps us safe. In order to protect it, the international community must continue to stand united and remain focused on Russia's behaviour and its attempts to integrate Crimea into Russia, including through the construction of a bridge across the Kerch Strait.

In conclusion, I reiterate the United Kingdom's full support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, including within its internationally recognized borders and territorial waters. We look forward to discussing the situation in Ukraine further at the forthcoming General Assembly debate on 20 February. I take note of the Russian Ambassador's enthusiasm for Security Council meetings on Ukraine and will look forward next time to hearing about what Russia will be doing to meet its obligations and end to the suffering of the people of Ukraine.

Mrs. Van Vlierberge (Belgium) (*spoke in French*):
At the outset, I would like to thank Assistant Secretaries-

General Mueller and Jenča and Mr. Apakan and Mr. Sajdik, representing the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, for their enlightening and informative briefings.

Four years since the conclusion of the Minsk agreements, we note that large-scale violent clashes have subsided. However, we also note that ceasefire violations continue almost every day, resulting in deaths and injuries not only among combatants, but also within the civilian population. The implementation of the agreements' key provisions remains a dead letter, even though it represents the only means to achieve a lasting political solution to the conflict. We therefore call on both sides to fully and swiftly implement the Minsk agreements, pursuant to resolution 2202 (2015), and to honour their commitments. We support the efforts of the Trilateral Contact Group, as well as those under the Normandy format, to that end.

We call on Russia to immediately stop fuelling the conflict by providing financial and military support to armed groups. We call on Russia to use its influence on those armed formations to encourage them to fully respect their commitments under the Minsk agreements. We regret that obstacles have prevented the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine from properly carrying out its monitoring and reporting tasks there. The Mission plays a crucial role in de-escalating tensions. We strongly encourage the parties to the conflict to respect the Mission's mandate and allow it safe and unhindered access to all Ukrainian territory, including along the border between Ukraine and Russia and in the Crimea.

The lack of progress in the implementation of the Minsk agreements is being felt on the ground. We remain deeply concerned about reports of Russian military equipment and personnel present in areas controlled by armed formations. The presence of heavy weapons, in contravention of the Minsk agreements, continues to pose a threat to the civilian population on both sides of the line of contact. We call for the complete withdrawal of those weapons and the disengagement of troops from those areas. We commend the Ukrainian authorities for extending the special status law for the Donbas region, which is one of the cornerstones of the Minsk agreements. On the other hand, Belgium condemns the November 2018 holding of elections in the rebel Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Those elections violate both the letter and the spirit of the Minsk agreements.

Belgium remains deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine. We urge all parties to allow full, continuous and unhindered access in accordance with humanitarian principles. We are particularly concerned about the fact that critical civilian infrastructure, such as that associated with water supply, is being targeted. As the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs mentioned earlier, 3.5 million people are in need of assistance and protection owing to the widespread presence of mines, increasing psychological trauma and the lack of access to basic services. We share a deep concern about their suffering and underscore the importance of the multi-year humanitarian response plan for 2019-2020.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We therefore do not recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia, which we consider to be contrary to international law. Recent tensions in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait due to Russian actions have only widened the gap between the two sides. The only way to bridge that gap is through dialogue, which we wholeheartedly encourage.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes today's informative meeting on the situation in Ukraine. We also thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General Mueller, Ambassador Apakan and Ambassador Sajdik for their briefings.

Today's meeting coincides with the fourth anniversary of the Minsk agreements, which, when signed on 12 February 2015, had raised great hopes in the international community. The Minsk agreements, in the Normandy format, set out not only the commitments of each party, but also a precise timetable for implementation. However, my delegation notes with regret the lack of progress in the implementation of the agreements, due to differing interpretations of the sequencing of the measures to be taken. The situation continues to be marked by recurring ceasefire violations and obstructions to the movement of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. Those facts, including the serious incidents that occurred on 25 November 2018 in the Kerch Strait, undeniably constitute major obstacles to the implementation of the Minsk agreements and thwart the international community's efforts to ensure the sustainable return of peace and stability in the region.

The deterioration of the security situation in Ukraine, as illustrated by the continued fighting along the line of contact in the east of the country, continues to cause many casualties and the destruction of civilian infrastructure essential for the provision of basic social services to civilians. That is why my country, whose position has always been in favour of the peaceful resolution of crises through dialogue, calls on Ukrainian stakeholders to fully implement the Minsk agreements, including by complying strictly with the ceasefire in force, in order to put an end to the suffering of the Ukrainian people. In that regard, Côte d'Ivoire supports the efforts of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission and the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination to de-escalate the conflict. It therefore calls on the parties to the conflict to take all appropriate measures to ease the situation, in particular by allowing the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination to play its role in supporting OSCE in monitoring the ceasefire.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its support for all efforts to find a political solution to the crisis in Ukraine. To that end, it encourages all stakeholders to respect their commitments to effectively implement the Minsk agreements and resolution 2202 (2015), which endorsed them.

Ms. Morrison González (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, we thank our invited speakers for their important briefings.

The Dominican Republic takes this opportunity to encourage all actors on the ground to pursue their efforts to bring peace to Ukraine and restore the conditions that will make it possible to lay the foundations for the stability and sustainable development of the country. It is very timely to reiterate our country's commitment to respecting the best practices of international law and the principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations, to contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security, and to complying strictly with international treaties and conventions to which we are signatories.

With regard to the implementation of the Minsk agreements, four years after they were signed major challenges continue to be reported on the ground. We note with concern that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine reported 9,500 ceasefire violations between 24 and 27 January this year. We are disturbed to learn that the conflict continues to wreak havoc on

civilians; hunger and poverty have affected more than 3.5 million people, not to mention more than 1.5 million internally displaced persons.

The Dominican Republic understands that, despite all of the setbacks and continued violations of the Minsk agreements, those agreements nonetheless constitute the legal basis for achieving a political solution that will put an end to the conflict in eastern Ukraine and all its repercussions in the region. We express our strong support for the package of measures endorsed by the Council in 2015 in order to achieve the effective implementation of the agreements. In that regard, we encourage the resumption of the prisoner exchange as an expression of the goodwill of the parties to move the peace process forward.

We welcome the statements made by the parties in support of the implementation of the Minsk agreements and hope that the conditions will be met for the establishment of a joint United Nations and OSCE peacebuilding mission in the conflict zone. We also take this opportunity to encourage the parties to heed the call for a ceasefire and to strive to honour their responsibilities and commitments under the agreements in order to make progress in the process and put an end to a conflict that is a source of concern for international peace and security, in particular for the region.

We welcome the solidarity of the international community and the efforts made by the United Nations not only to alleviate the problems suffered by civilians affected by the conflict, but also and above all for the high level of commitment to building sustainable peace for the Ukrainian people. We must continue supporting all actions to improve access to assistance and basic services for the most vulnerable.

Our delegation takes this opportunity to express our commitment to defending Ukraine's independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We encourage respect for the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes and express our rejection of any violation of international norms, international law and international humanitarian law. We also join efforts to ensure that those violating such international provisions are brought to justice.

Lastly, as we commemorate the fourth anniversary of the Minsk agreements, we encourage the parties to maintain dialogue in the current Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. We call for

concerted efforts to make significant progress towards stability and peace in Ukraine, thereby contributing to international peace and security.

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

At the outset, we thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller and Ambassadors Apakan and Sajdik of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for their comprehensive briefings.

We also thank the delegation of the Russian Federation for requesting today's important briefing on the situation in Ukraine and the commemoration of the implementation of the Minsk agreements, which were signed on 12 February 2015, exactly four years ago, by the leaders of Ukraine, Germany, Russia and France in an effort to end the war in the country. Regrettably, four years later not even one provision of the Minsk agreements has been fully implemented. We therefore remind the parties that the only way to achieve peace and stability in the region is through the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, which remain the basis for the international community's commitment to finding a peaceful solution to the conflict.

The situation in eastern Ukraine remains a source of concern. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine reports ongoing violations of the ceasefire in the areas of Donetsk and Luhansk, leading to an increase in tensions and the exacerbation of the situation in the east of the country. Reducing tensions and violence in the region in the east of the country must remain one of the main priorities for paving the way to a peaceful solution to the crisis.

The path to stability in Donbas is still long but it cannot be achieved if the parties do not show the political will with that first step. In that regard, we call for a ceasefire and urge the parties concerned to respect the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, endorsed in resolution 2202 (2015). We also urge them to continue to make use of the means established to help resolve the conflict, such as the Normandy Four, the Trilateral Contact Group and other key actors. Cooperation, efforts and political will are essential to achieving a peaceful and political solution to the crisis.

Finally, we appreciate the efforts of the OSCE on the ground to uphold the ceasefire and ensure compliance

with the Minsk agreements. We also appreciate the work and efforts of the humanitarian workers on the ground and the support of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and his team for humanitarian assistance in the region to provide vital aid to the population. In that regard, we call on the parties to take the necessary steps to comply with their international obligations to respect international humanitarian law and human rights.

In conclusion, we believe that a solution to the crisis in the region can be achieved only by peaceful means through direct, frank and inclusive negotiations, aimed at a lasting and just solution that will help to strengthen harmonious relations among Ukraine's different ethnic groups. As we have said on other occasions, a sustainable solution to the crisis in Ukraine can only be political. The international community must therefore focus its efforts to that end.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I would like to start by expressing my delegation's appreciation to you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to participate in the Security Council discussion of an issue of the utmost concern to us. I also thank all our briefers — Mr. Jenča, Ms. Mueller, Ambassadors Apakan and Sajdik — for their inputs. We are profoundly grateful for their devoted efforts to assist my country. We would also like to express our gratitude to all Security Council members, in particular the new members, who spoke in support of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Since we cannot exclude the fact that the Russian delegation may make it a customary practice to call for thematic meetings related to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict based on the dates of certain significant events, let me try and put together an indicative list of dates, which is by no means exhaustive, for Council members to keep in mind while making preparations for the upcoming months. It is as follows.

On 20 February 2014, Russia started its invasion of Crimea. A week from now there will be a General Assembly debate on that date, but perhaps someone will come up with the idea of having a discussion also in the Security Council. It is better to be prepared, just in case. The day of 16 March marks the holding of the infamous so-called referendum in Crimea. On 27 March

2014, the General Assembly adopted resolution 68/262, asserting that the so-called referendum had no validity and could not form the basis for any alteration of the status of Crimea.

Incidentally, the Russian side is consistently pushing the narrative of the peaceful nature of events in Crimea. I will cite just one episode from 2014 for the Council's consideration. On 18 March, the Ukrainian warrant officer Serhiy Kokurin, a native of Crimea, was shot in the heart by two bullets during an assault by the Russian special forces on the Ukrainian cartographic station near Simferopol. He was the very first Ukrainian soldier killed by Russia in this war.

On 14 June, the Russian forces shot down a Ukrainian transport aircraft over the Luhansk airport, killing 40 Ukrainian paratroopers and nine crew members.

The day of 17 July marks the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17, which was another terrorist attack by Russia. All 298 people onboard were killed.

On 23-24 August, four battalion tactical groups of the Russian armed forces invaded the territory of Ukraine.

The day of 5 September marks the signing of the Minsk Protocol, which, together with the Memorandum outlining the parameters for the implementation of commitments of the Minsk Protocol, constitutes the core of the Minsk agreements, with the package of measures for their implementation. For the record, on the Russian side, the document was signed by the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Ukraine, Mikhail Zurabov. That is with regard to the issue as to whether Russia is a party to the conflict or whether it has nothing to do with the conflict in Ukraine.

On 22 October, at a meeting of the Permanent Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Russia blocked the adoption of the decision to extend the mandate of the OSCE observer mission at the Russian checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk to the entire uncontrolled part of the Ukrainian-Russian border. Incidentally, paragraph 4 of the aforementioned Minsk Protocol reads as follows:

“Ensure permanent monitoring on the Ukrainian-Russian state border and verification by the OSCE, together with the creation of a security area in the border regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation”.

On 2 November, illegal elections were held in the occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. That was yet another violation of the Minsk Protocol, of which paragraph 9 reads:

“Ensure the holding of early local elections in accordance with the Law of Ukraine ‘With respect to the temporary status of local self-government in certain areas of the Donetsk and the Lugansk regions’”.

Worse, the recent holding in late November 2018 by the administration of the Russian occupation of another illegal so-called election in the occupied areas added insult to injury. It was a clear and deliberate provocation to undermine the Minsk agreements.

The day of 25 November 2018 marks another significant development, when the Russian navy attacked Ukraine’s two armoured boats and a tugboat in the Azov Sea.

On 13 January 2015, the Russian forces shelled a checkpoint near the town of Volnovakha. Twelve civilians were killed and 18 more were wounded. Later the same month, on 24 January, the Russian forces randomly shelled the outskirts of Mariupol, killing 31 civilians.

Let me now answer the question of the colleague from Germany about the Stanytsia Luhanska crossing point, which, by the way, was visited a couple of days ago jointly by the Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Mr. Klimkin, and the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Slovak Foreign Minister Lajčák. Our Minister of course repeated the commitment of the Ukrainian side to the opening of the checkpoint but, unfortunately, that is not enough because, as members may know, there is a bridge connecting the two sides. The bridge is almost completely destroyed. It needs to be repaired. The Ukrainian side needs access to the area and to the bridge for that, but to date that has unfortunately been denied by the other side.

I now turn to the subject of today’s meeting. I must immediately ask my colleagues around the table for indulgence, since even an abridged account of the state of implementation of the Minsk agreements is quite extensive and, in all probability, my statement will last more than five minutes. I count on the Council’s understanding.

Today we heard an already well-known interpretation — or, to be more precise,

misinterpretation — of the implementation of the Minsk agreements by the Russian representative. But the reality is quite different. All daily developments prove that it is only Russia and its ongoing military activity in the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, as well as in Crimea, that for now constitute an unsurmountable obstacle to the peaceful resolution of the conflict. The Russian side proposes a very selective approach to the implementation of the Minsk agreements, emphasizing the political elements in its own interpretation. However, it completely ignores its own obligations in the security and humanitarian spheres. Let me start with some numbers.

As of the beginning of February, the Russian armed formations in Donbas have in their possession 496 main battle tanks — comparable to the arsenals of countries such as Germany, France and Indonesia — 938 armoured combat vehicles — similar to Peru and Kuwait — 128 multiple launch rocket systems — somewhat less than Indonesia — 776 artillery systems, including self-propelled ones — again, comparable to the numbers of such former Council members as Kazakhstan or Ethiopia.

The armed force of 35,000 in occupied Donbas is supported by over 2,100 Russian regular military, mostly in key command and control positions. Many of them already have a lot of experience in Syria. The total number of the Russian offensive strike group personnel along the Russian-Ukrainian border, including the groups adjacent to the occupied territories of Donbas and Crimea, is 87,750 military. Those are quite some numbers, are they not? Now the question: what do these numbers speak of in terms of Russia’s real intentions? Do they show that the party in question wants to de-escalate the situation? I will let the Council draw its own conclusions.

Since the Russian representative decided to quote some of the provisions of the Minsk agreements, but not as many as during the most recent meetings, I would also like to remind him that it was Russia that violated its commitments almost instantly following the signing of the Minsk documents. In particular, the Russian forces attacked and seized the city of Debaltseve on 16 to 18 February 2015, immediately after the Minsk package of measures, which established the comprehensive ceasefire as of 15 February, had been signed by the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France.

The logic of the Minsk agreements envisages the immediate implementation of initial security provisions — a ceasefire and heavy weapons withdrawal. From 2015 on, Russia has effectively sabotaged the implementation of ceasefire agreements 18 times — I repeat, 18 times. During this period there were over 54,000 cases of ceasefire violations. In almost 6,000 cases the Russian forces used weapon systems prohibited by the Minsk agreements.

Now, with regard to the heavy weapons withdrawal, Ukraine has withdrawn all the prescribed weapons as per paragraph 2 of the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. We regularly provide the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission with detailed inventory lists of such weapons. The most recent list was sent to the Mission on 9 February. There are numerous and regular cases of blatant violations of stationing heavy weapons by the other side in the immediate vicinity of the actual contact line, not the withdrawal line. There has been no progress in negotiations about creating a heavy-weapon-free area near Mariupol. Do I need to say that it is the Russian representatives that block any discussion of the issue?

What about the withdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine, in accordance with paragraph 10 of the package of measures? The picture is crystal clear. Reports of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission offer an additional insight into the presence of the Russian weapon systems and, by extension, of the Russian military, including radio reconnaissance systems, four different distinct electronic warfare systems, the latest radars and jamming stations in the occupied territories of Ukraine.

Let us now have a look at how the sides implement the provision relating to the monitoring and verification by the OSCE Mission, as referred to in paragraph 3 of the package of measures. Ukraine provides the maximum support possible to the work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, which is deployed in Ukraine at the invitation of its Government. Again, I will let the numbers speak for themselves. During the latest ceasefire period the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission reported just one case of a Mission convoy being stopped by the Ukrainian forces. What do we have on the other side? There have been 37 cases of limiting the freedom of movement of the OSCE monitors.

In 2016 and 2017 all OSCE Special Monitoring Mission long-range unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) were shot down over the occupied territories. In 2018 the Mission restarted their use for monitoring purposes. The latest long-range UAV downing was on 27 October 2018. As a result, all UAVs are under constant threat.

In 2018 alone, the Special Monitoring Mission encountered over 900 restrictions of access in the Russia-occupied parts of Donbas, especially near the State border and in southern parts of the Donetsk region adjacent to the Sea of Azov.

Again, some facts: in 2018 there were 153 cases of illegal crossing of the Ukraine-Russia border by automobile and rail transport carrying military goods, fuel, arms and weapons, armaments and munitions. There have already been 19 cases in 2019, in just over one month.

That is why we still believe that a peacekeeping operation under United Nations auspices can bring peace to Ukraine. We are ready for constructive discussions on this initiative. For Ukraine it is a matter of principle that any decision on establishing a peacekeeping operation in Donbas extend its mandate over the entire occupied territory, provide for the withdrawal of all foreign troops and mercenaries and their weaponry from the territory of Ukraine, as well as the dissolution of all illegal bodies and structures. It no less important that any peacekeeping operation be based on key United Nations peacekeeping principles, first and foremost, impartiality, even-handedness and neutrality.

We call on Russia to give up its attempts to misuse the United Nations peacekeeping toolbox in order to legitimize the gains of aggression in Donbas. The only way for Russia to prove its declared willingness towards de-escalation is to stop the talk and walk the walk — and to join Ukraine and partners in constructive work on a peacekeeping operation. It must be a full-fledged mission, deployed to all Russia-occupied areas of Donbas, including along the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian State border.

Having discussed in detail the implementation of the Minsk agreements and the respective Security Council resolution, I would also like to bring to the attention of Council members another document of this body, that is, the statement by the President of the Security Council S/26118, of 20 July 1993, which was adopted following the Council's consideration of the agenda

item entitled “Complaint by Ukraine regarding the Decree of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation concerning Sevastopol”. That is not a forgotten story. The document contains the following words:

“The Security Council reaffirms in this connection its commitment to the territorial integrity of Ukraine, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The Security Council recalls that in the Treaty between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, signed in Kiev on 19 November 1990, the High Contracting Parties committed themselves to respect each other’s territorial integrity within their currently existing frontiers.”

The Russian representative at that time said at that Council meeting:

“As we remain dedicated to the principle of the inviolability of the borders within the Commonwealth of Independent States, inter alia between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, Russia intends strictly to abide by the fundamental norms of civilized behavior for States in the international arena, based on the firm ground of international law, respect for the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.” (*S/PV.3256, pp. 14-15*)

As we see, the Russian firm intention of 1993 to conduct itself as a civilized State has not, unfortunately, evolved into a principled and consistent policy, as its invasions in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine in 2014 clearly reveal. And that is the State that is fond of accusing others of “недоговороспособность”, which is a Russian word that means being incapable of fulfilling one’s contractual obligations. It can be quite fascinating to see the Russians declaring one thing, doing the complete opposite and simultaneously attempting, figuratively speaking, to turn the tables and convince everyone that black is white and white is black. At this point, I would like to cite Matthew 7:16: “Ye shall know them by their fruits”. The Russian fruits are rather obvious.

In conclusion, as our rhetorical exercise here has continued for nearly three hours already, and as our friends have already reminded us, I would like to remind the Council that tomorrow the Trilateral Contact Group will hold what is already its 103rd meeting. For many months, the Minsk process participants have desperately tried to convince Russia to at least agree to the exchange of prisoners, based on any formula

agreeable to them, including all for all. Ukraine has sent 13 official written proposals with different formulas for exchanging Ukrainian prisoners and detainees in Russia and the occupied territories for Russian citizens in Ukraine who have been sentenced for crimes against my country’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. We have received no response. We care about our people, and Russia is sending a clear signal to all its soldiers fighting in Ukraine that it will do nothing to bring them back home. The issue at stake in Minsk tomorrow is the fate of three Ukrainians who have been captured and held in Donetsk for nearly four years now. Their names are Bohdan Pantyushenko, Oleksandr Korynkov and Serhiy Hlondar, whose three-year-old daughter has never seen him. Let us make our meeting meaningful and jointly call on Russia to release them.

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

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would naturally like to comment on some of the remarks that we have heard here today. I am not going to get into a direct argument with my Ukrainian colleague, but will merely point out that he went to a great deal of trouble to substitute the Russian military for one of the parties to the conflict, the separatists in Donbas. It is a disingenuous but effective approach because talking about how the Russian military participated in the conflict is a way of tying Russia to the non-implementation of the Minsk agreements. I could see what he was doing there, and we will come back to it again. However, Ukraine’s representative said nothing about Kyiv’s failure to implement point after point of the Minsk agreements, and I will come back to that as well.

Unfortunately, we heard nothing new today, just the same tired mantras that we have been hearing for years now. That is sad, because we have spent the greater part of our statement on it. Despite that, the Council is still willing to do anything to cover for its protégés whatever they do. Russia, Russia, Russia, Russia, Russia — that is practically all we have heard today. Even Ukraine has barely been mentioned — and in the context of the Minsk agreements — and virtually no one has mentioned the 4 million residents of Donbas, who also have a voice. And live in that region. Or perhaps the Council does not count them as people, so as to avoid asking about their opinion of what is happening in south-eastern Ukraine. And overall, in fact, today we heard more discussions

of the Sea of Azov and Crimea — which we will also come back to — neither of which is mentioned in the Minsk agreements. The representative of France said that we had an aggressor country and a country that is a victim of that aggression sitting at the table today, and then spoke of his support for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). But there is no provision in the OSCE's mandate that says that the OSCE should be working to disengage Russia and Ukraine in this conflict. And, incidentally, that is not in the Minsk agreements either.

A new chapter has recently emerged in our Council meetings in the form of our dialogues with our friend Christoph Heusgen, the Permanent Representative of Germany, who devoted a significant part of his statement to conversing with me. I am delighted with his initiative and would like to comment on some of his remarks. To start with, thanks to his own admission, we learned today that he is one of the authors of the Minsk agreements. Now at least we know whom to hold accountable. My friend Christoph said, probably in a Freudian slip, that in 2015 Russia took Minsk. I do know that Russia took Berlin, but that was a long time ago, and before that we liberated Minsk. But in 2015 we were not in Minsk and had no intention of being there. It is where our friends, brothers and allies live. We certainly have no plans to take anything or invade anywhere. That is not how we do things. Interference is how our Western colleagues do things, something we are seeing a clear example of today in one country in Latin America.

Whether intentionally or not — I incline to the former — my friend Christoph tried very hard to insert Russia into his statement, both to the point and not. Even when he was talking about repairing a bridge it came out as if it was something that Ukraine should agree on with Russia. My friend Christoph said that our proposal for a Security Council resolution was a joke. I would like to remind him that it is a joke that President Putin discussed with Chancellor Merkel, and it was at her request that we added to the proposed mandate of the mission described in the resolution the function of protecting the OSCE Monitoring Mission not only at the line of contact but also in travelling throughout the region.

A great deal has been said today about Russia's occupation of Donbas and the presence there of the Russian military. Today the Permanent Representative of Ukraine showered us with statistics in that regard.

I would like to take advantage of the presence here — well, not here, but with us — of Mr. Apakan and Mr. Sajdik to ask them if they have seen many Russian forces in Donbas, if they are familiar with the figures that the Permanent Representative of Ukraine shared with us today, and if they can confirm them. We have also heard a lot today about the disengagement of heavy weaponry. At one point an agreement was reached through the mediation of the OSCE that disengagement would take place after the first seven days of quiet on the line of contact. There have been dozens of days of quiet on the line of contact, as the OSCE Mission has confirmed. So go on, then, they would say to the two sides, disengage. At which point our Ukrainian colleagues would say, "No, our numbers are different. There have been violations". And so it has gone on to this day. We could have questioned many other aspects, including Ukraine's role in the Trilateral Contact Group and its sub-groups. And we could have talked about how it is sabotaging the processes on the political, economic and humanitarian and other fronts, but then I fear we would be here all night.

Someone today mentioned the Budapest Memorandum, which was related to the agreements having to do with Ukraine's renunciation of the nuclear weapons that remained in its territory after the collapse of the former Soviet Union. It outlines the obligations of all the countries party to the Memorandum to refrain from using nuclear weapons against Ukraine and to abide by all the OSCE principles. We are fully committed to those obligations. But the Budapest Memorandum contains no obligations or agreement to support unconstitutional coups d'état or violent power grabs, which are directly included in the OSCE principles. Incidentally, we recognize Ukraine's territorial integrity and independence, something that was implicitly cast into question today. Ukraine has only itself to blame for the fact that Crimea escaped it in March 2014. The situation there would be much worse than it is in the Donbas region today if it had not done so. In general I find it laughable to listen to the stories about what is going on in Crimea from people who have never been there and their sententious pronouncements about the dire situation and suffering of its inhabitants, which my British colleague spoke about earlier. I think he cannot even guess how far he is from the truth. We invite him to visit. They will be pleased to see him. He also asserted that we do not allow monitoring missions to enter Crimea. That is not true either. We have frequently invited United Nations

missions to Crimea and declared our willingness to welcome any such missions as long as the necessary legal conditions are met.

What I would like to know is where many Council members have seen Ukraine's commitment to implementing the Minsk agreements. Under what microscope or jeweller's loupe? It is a mystery. And of course this is the real joke. They do not want to hear or listen to what is being said. What commitments and which provisions of the Minsk agreements is Russia supposed to implement? I urge Council members once again to re-read the Minsk agreements. If they can free themselves from the notion that it is Russian military forces rather than the residents of Donetsk and Luhansk who live there, if they can delete that, they will then clearly see that those who are not implementing the Minsk agreements are the very people who are directly party to them.

We are ready to celebrate every date that we are asked to observe, and we too have something to say about that. I hope that we will have the opportunity to talk about this again. As I said at the beginning of the meeting, we are happy to take advantage of any opportunity to discuss the situation in Ukraine, and I think that life will present us with those opportunities.

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

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I too have heard nothing new in the statement by my Russian colleague, barring a very few things. First, I am very glad that the issue of Crimea is once again part of the Security Council's discussions. It is the first time that I have not heard my colleague say that Crimea is not an issue. It is a good thing that we are discussing it. Another exception that I forgot to mention in my initial statement is that there certainly is one new element in the Russian delegation's rhetoric, and no doubt its new favourite topic, which is the upcoming holding of presidential elections in Ukraine. Sometimes I think that the results of Ukraine's presidential elections are even more important to Russians than their own are. With regard to the millions of Ukrainians living in Russia who will be deprived of the right to vote and whom the Russian representative mentioned in his statement, I would like to remind my colleague that when I was Ambassador to Moscow in 2012 during the last Ukrainian elections that were held during my time there, 12,000 Ukrainian citizens voted

all over Russia. In 2014, the number dropped to 1,200. I therefore wonder about the millions he mentioned. With regard to the 4 million people in the Donbas region who will be unable to vote in the presidential elections, if he would like them to vote as the people did in Crimea, under the barrels of Russian guns, perhaps they could vote. So how about allowing the 2.2 million Ukrainian citizens in Crimea to participate and vote in the elections? Then we would see what the equilibrium of support really is.

Finally, to sum up, I would like to quote from the latest opus published yesterday in the Russian *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, an article by Mr. Vladislav Surkov, whose name, I believe, is well known, at least around this table. He writes,

"Having fallen from the level of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to that of the Russian Federation, Russia has ceased to fall, has begun to recover and has returned to its natural and only possible status as a great, expanding and community of nations gathering lands unto itself". I believe that Ukraine is probably not the last country on that list.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of Germany has asked to make a further statement.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): I heard the pleas from both the Ukrainian Ambassador and our Russian colleague — at length — to consider the 4 million people in Donbas. To hark back to what some of our briefers, particularly on humanitarian issues, said earlier, why is it not possible to do something practical and, after this meeting, send a message home and say that tomorrow in the Trilateral Contact Group, with Ambassador Sajdik, they are determined to work on fixing the bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska. If they could do just that one thing — engage there and get the bridge done, which I believe the International Committee of the Red Cross is ready to do it immediately — and demonstrate some political commitment and compassion for the people, we really will have achieved something during these three hours.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Mr. Apakan to respond to the comments of the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Apakan: The question that has been raised has been handled in the daily and weekly reports of the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) of the

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. And if one goes through those SMM reports one can observe accounts of illegal activities, fighting, shelling and other ceasefire violations. In that regard, I would not like to make any comments here that would go beyond the scope of our reports, because the reports are based on established facts, and our teams are patrolling, monitoring and producing reports. That is the reason why instead of making a concrete and tangible observation here, I would like to refer to the reports of the SMM. In that respect, we have received reports of people in uniforms, claiming to be from the Russian Federation and other countries, as well

as mercenaries. The Special Monitoring Mission has reported its observations of vehicles bearing Russian flags, but has not identified their origin.

I have to say that, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, there has been no reference in these reports to military units. I am referring to reports and not making any personal observation or judgment. These are the elements that we have reported over the course of four or five years. They are nothing new and have been reiterated on several occasions by the Mission.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.