

As prepared for delivery

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**SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE OSCE CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE IN UKRAINE AND IN THE
TRILATERAL CONTACT GROUP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PEACE PLAN IN THE EAST
OF UKRAINE**

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start with stating that: There is no single day in the Ukrainian conflict when we can feel sure what the next day will bring us. There is even the frequent fear that the situation in eastern-Ukraine may completely get out of hand. At the same time we understand that we should not give up and should continue to work with all our hearts for peace.

Let us hope that the recent fighting, including the attacks on Debaltseve, was only a deplorable incident on the way to the implementation of the Minsk agreements, although it was a very serious and tragic event. And we do not accept to look the other way. We shall open our eyes to reality - a sad reality! What we saw in Debaltseve and what we continue to see all over the Eastern part of Ukraine is not an abstract of facts, figures, guidelines and declarations. It is first and foremost a situation of human tragedy. Of sons and brothers being killed, of families torn apart, of wide-spread destruction, of the plight suffered by refugees and displaced persons, of broken homes and shattered dreams. And it is not just Ukraine or the Eastern part of Ukraine. It is a conflict that may put into peril the full structure of security and cooperation in Europe which was initiated in Helsinki forty years ago and which gave this organization and this assembly its name. We seem to be at a crossroads now.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no doubt in my mind that the fighting in and around Debaltseve and some other places following the cease-fire effective since last Sunday, was a violation, a serious violation of the cease-fire agreement, reached in Minsk only a short time before.

At the same time we do believe that DeBaltseve will not bring an end to the Minsk agreements, including the most recent Declaration of the four Heads of State and Governments and the Implementation package of 12 February 2015. We shall as adamantly as needs be insist on the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. In this context, we feel particularly encouraged by the ongoing contacts among the Heads of State and Government who were present at Minsk.

There is also work to be done at the Trilateral Contact Group and elsewhere. We had a meeting of the TCG and consultations with representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions last night, and we were able to discuss humanitarian issues in the conflict zone, including the release of prisoners, in particular prisoners of war, and relating to the urgent needs of the civilian population in the war-stricken area, meaning medical supplies, food and shelter etc.

We also discussed the role of SMM in the conflict zone and the right for freedom of movement in the whole area. Of course we also raised as prominent items the complete cessation of fire at all places with the agreed withdrawal of heavy weaponry. I welcome the ongoing elaboration of practical steps and timelines to that effect, and I encourage those who are working jointly on this task both from the Russian and the Ukrainian sides to complete their task in the shortest time possible. The success of their work will also be proof of the continued relevance of the Minsk agreements.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

It is our hope that our joint efforts for the peace process will make it possible to come to a point that will enable us to implement also those parts of the Minsk documents that need a more stable political and military environment for their implementation as we have it now.

In this context I would like to draw your attention to point 13 of the implementation package signed in Minsk on 12 February, 2015, where the signatories commit themselves to intensifying the work of the Trilateral Contact Group including through the establishment of working groups on the implementation of relevant aspects of the Minsk agreements. We have already devised an outline for this purpose, including responsibilities and workloads of such working groups, and I would be happy if it would be possible to reach the stage of them being set up and the beginning of their practical working in the foreseeable future. However, this depends on a substantial improvement of the situation on the ground, i.e. the full respect of the cease-fire provisions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me conclude my remarks by recalling what I said at the beginning. That we are at a crossroads and that we need firm action in order to prevent the Ukraine conflict from spinning out of control. It is my deep belief that we have the means, political and moral, for doing so. I urge you to join in this effort !