

10 April 2015

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Minister for Europe

Thank you for your letter of 11 March to the Prime Minister, copied to the Foreign Secretary and the Defence Secretary, about the alleged use of cluster munitions in Ukraine. I am replying as Private Secretary to the Minister for Europe.

We are concerned by reports alleging the use of cluster munitions in Ukraine. We are aware that the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine stated on 21 October and 3 December that the Ukrainian Army has not used cluster munitions.

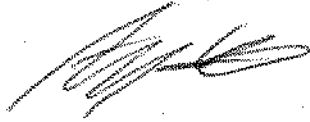
Cluster munitions should in no circumstances be used intentionally to target civilians, and all parties to the conflict must act in accordance with international humanitarian law.

The UK takes its obligation to seek universalisation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions very seriously. Acceding to the Convention is the only way to guarantee a state will no longer use cluster munitions. To that end, on 25 March 2015 we hosted a reception at Lancaster House to encourage states to do so. My ministerial colleague at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Tobias Ellwood, spoke on the humanitarian imperative to join the Convention. Ukraine was invited to send a representative to this event, and we encourage it to accede to the Convention as soon as possible.

With respect to the use of weapons which may be in close proximity to civilians or civilian objects, our view is that international humanitarian law (IHL) adequately regulates this area. All parties to the conflict in Ukraine should ensure that they act with distinction, proportionality, and with sufficient precautions in attack. We are concerned about any activity which violates the principles of IHL.

This Government is clear that there can't be a military solution to the Ukraine crisis. We welcome the latest Minsk agreement of 12 February, which has led to a significant reduction in fighting and the reports that both sides are withdrawing heavy weapons from the line of contact. These are small steps in the right direction. However, we remain concerned by reports of ongoing breaches of the ceasefire. What we need to see now is full implementation of the Minsk agreements by all parties. Above all, a permanent peaceful solution requires Russia to end its

deliberate and continued destabilisation of Ukraine. Russia must withdraw its equipment and troops from Ukraine, secure its borders and cease support for the separatists.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Lidington', written in a cursive style.

PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE RT HON DAVID LIDINGTON