



**Permanent Mission of Ukraine**  
to the International Organizations in Vienna

PC.DEL/1000/17  
14 July 2017

ENGLISH only

## **Statement on “Russia’s on-going aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea”**

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1154<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
13 July 2017

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The discussions at the OSCE informal Ministerial meeting in Mauerbach two days ago reaffirmed the grave damage inflicted by the on-going Russian aggression against Ukraine upon the security landscape in Europe. The flagrant violation of the OSCE basic principles and commitments by the Russian Federation remains the source of continuing loss of life, human suffering and destruction and is the overarching impediment to progress in restoring mutual trust and confidence in the OSCE area.

For its part, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly at its Annual session last week reiterated its strong position of rejection of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine by adopting the “Resolution on Restoration of the Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity of Ukraine”. Amongst its important provisions, the Resolution calls on Russia to implement its commitments under the Minsk agreements, stop shelling, withdraw its forces, military equipment and mercenaries from the occupied areas in Ukraine, take measures for ensuring safety and freedom of movement of the SMM monitors, allow permanent OSCE monitoring of the border as well as to respect human rights in the occupied areas and reverse the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. In this context we wish to echo the words of the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly that the adopted Declaration has democratic legitimacy which is undeniable.

It requires concerted and consistent international pressure on Russia to make it return to the tenets of international law.

The urgency of giving momentum to the process of implementation of the Minsk agreements, which has been blocked by Russia’s unwillingness to fulfill the security provisions as the necessary and basic requirement for progress on the political track, featured prominently in high level meetings, visits and consultations, which took place in the past week. We hope that the forthcoming contacts at the level

of Heads of States in Normandy format will serve to stimulate Russia's implementation of undertaken commitments.

### **Distinguished colleagues,**

Three weeks have passed since the so called "harvest ceasefire" was agreed by the TCG for the period from 24 June to 31 August 2017. To our deep regret, this ceasefire has been constantly flouted by the hybrid Russian forces just as the ceasefires announced before. Observing the situation the SMM had to note in its weekly report of 5 July that "the hopes faded that it would belatedly take hold". The Russia-backed illegal armed formations keep shelling and firing along the contact line, increasing the toll of civilian and military casualties. They continue to accumulate heavy artillery and replenish ammunition from Russia, getting ready for further military provocations and offensives. A small part of the weaponry is registered by the SMM on a daily basis even under the current self-imposed security restrictions and denials of access in the occupied areas of Donbas. Notable are the findings of presence of 10 MLRS "BM-21 Grad" near non-government-controlled Khrustalnyi (SMM report of 7 July) and 2 stationary self-propelled howitzers "2S1 Gvozdika" near non-government-controlled Zaichenko (SMM report of 8 July), as well as the impact site in government-controlled Pisky caused by an artillery round (of at least 122mm calibre) fired from a north-easterly direction (SMM report of 10 July) and 17 outgoing MLRS rounds fired from the outskirts of Donetsk (SMM weekly report of 12 July).

It is utterly unacceptable that Russia's proxies in the occupied areas of Donbas continue, with tacit Moscow's support, to deliberately threaten and compromise the safety and security of the SMM patrols. Following the incident of 29 June, when two militants from Luhansk threatened to shoot at SMM patrol and many other cases of intimidation, harassment, threats and attacks directed at the international monitors, on 7 July an armed man backed up his demands by pointing a rifle at the SMM patrol near non-government-controlled Kremynets. The same day, the SMM was not allowed to pass through the same village at all.

As the Russian side continues to turn a blind eye on all these incidents and ignores calls for bringing the responsible to account, the Russia-backed illegal armed formations mount far-fetched allegations against the SMM, disputing the facts the SMM had established and reported and using the controlled media to blame the SMM for the incidents. As underlined by the SMM, such behaviour enables the environment for attacks on the SMM to continue.

We note with concern that the Mission keeps facing significant restrictions of freedom of movement in the non-government controlled areas through denials of access. The week covered by the SMM weekly report of 5 July was no exception to the previous ones: apart from restrictions related to mines, the illegal armed formations restricted the SMM on 12 occasions out of a total of 14. The last SMM weekly report of 12 July indicates 10 such restrictions in the occupied areas out of 11 in total, i.e. 90%. This is how the hybrid Russian forces effectively prevent the

SMM from implementing its mandate and providing the OSCE with objective information on the developments on the ground. The persistence of the security incidents and restrictions concerning the SMM underline the consistent failure by the Russian Federation to honour its commitments. While expecting the SMM Chief Monitor, Ambassador E. Apakan to present a comprehensive update to the Permanent Council next week, we urge Russia to take immediate practical steps to enable secure environment for the SMM, free from restrictions.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The urgency of the humanitarian priority of release of hostages and illegally detained persons, who remain in captivity of the Russian side in certain areas of Donbas, the Crimean peninsula and in the territory of the Russian Federation, cannot be overstated. Welcoming the announcement by Special Representative Ambassador M. Sajdik of completion of additional checks on the free will of detainees in relation to the conflict (the so-called attestation mechanism), we expect the release to take place without delay. Today the Ukrainian film-maker Oleg Sentsov marks his birthday, being incarcerated in a Russian prison on fabricated charges. He was detained by occupation forces in Crimea in May 2014 because of his pro-Ukrainian position and non-acceptance of Russian occupation and was sentenced by a show trial to twenty years in prison. I invite all colleagues to join today's international Twitter campaign under #FreeSentsov. We urge the Russian Federation to release O. Sentsov and all other Ukrainian citizens who have been thrown behind bars in Russia as political prisoners. We look forward to active facilitation of the OSCE on this matter.

We also expect a dedicated attention of the OSCE to the situation in the illegally occupied Crimea, where gross human rights violations and repressive policies continue. We urge Russia to fulfill, in particular, the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice three months ago to refrain from maintaining or imposing limitations on the ability of the Crimean Tatar community to conserve its representative institutions, including the Mejlis, and to ensure availability of education in the Ukrainian language.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Last week we informed the Permanent Council about the capture of the Russian Army serviceman Viktor Ageyev on 24 June as he was engaged in a subversive operation on the territory of Ukraine. Dismissing the denials of the Russian Defence Ministry, this Russian serviceman confirms that he was sent to Donbas after signing the contract for military service with the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in March 2017.

This and many other denials by the Russian Federation, which aim at masking its military intervention into Ukraine, remain the major obstacle to progress in peaceful resolution of the conflict, started by Russia.

**Distinguished colleagues,**

Before concluding my statement, I wish to underscore the resolve of the Ukrainian nation to realize its European choice, despite aggression of the neighbouring state to prevent it. Today's Ukraine – EU Summit, held in Kyiv, takes place against the background of completion of the ratification process of Ukraine-EU Association agreement, which will take full effect on 1 September 2017. This marks achievement of a new stage of historic significance in our relations that will foster deeper political ties, stronger economic links and enhance respect for common values.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**