



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

As for delivery by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1152nd meeting of the Permanent Council,
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Mr. Chairperson,

Today we will start our statement by placing into focus the continuing significant restrictions and intimidations affecting the SMM monitors in areas of Donbas controlled by the hybrid Russian forces. We wish to particularly draw attention of the Permanent Council to the SMM report of 30 June and will quote the respective paragraph in full: “In “LPR”-controlled Vesela Hora, two so called “LPR” members (males, 25-30 years old) armed with assault (7.62mm) rifles, wearing grey camouflaged clothing without insignia or badges and with black balaclavas covering their faces approached the SMM vehicles. They asked the SMM patrol members in both vehicles if they had been in the same settlement the day before and alleged that SMM members had congratulated residents on the day of the Ukrainian constitution. The armed men told the SMM members that they would shoot the SMM members if such a message was repeated.”

This incident highlights the level of risks posed by hybrid fighters who enjoy impunity on the part of their commanders in Russia and areas of Donbas, de-facto controlled by Russia. Such incidents continue to regularly happen, following the on-going unwillingness of the Russian side to commit to the safety of the monitors and to start implementing its obligations under the Minsk agreements. The political will of Russia remains the necessary precondition for its proxies in Donbas to stop abusing, intimidating and attacking the international civilian monitors.

The incident referred to in the SMM report of 30 June also put into spotlight that it was not a purported “concern for the use of Russian language” that triggered Moscow’s decision on an armed aggression in Donbas, but an urge to destroy Ukrainian statehood and eradicate its manifestations. The Russian Federation continues to seek to undermine Ukraine’s sovereignty and political independence by violating its territorial integrity and fuelling the conflict in Donbas by Russian mercenaries, weapons, ammunition and finances supplied through the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. The determination to continue those supplies has once again been demonstrated by Russia in the Informal meeting on ways to improve transparency along the Ukrainian-Russian state border held

yesterday, on 5 June, when the Russian side had rejected the possibility of expanding the mandate of the OSCE Observer Mission to all sections of the border currently not under control of the Ukrainian authorities.

The same SMM report of 30 June informed that “a male employee of a coal mine told the SMM that it needed to get permission from “LPR” members in Luhansk in order to speak to him”. While in the past the SMM has repeatedly informed on the occasions when medical personnel at hospitals in non-government-controlled areas were refusing to provide the SMM information without written permission of the illegal armed formations, such cases demonstrate the increasing scale of Russia’s efforts as an occupying power to keep full control over the local population in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

These few findings add to the exposure of the criminal and repressive nature of this Russia-imposed occupation regime, perpetrating violence, human sufferings and economic deprivation. They also make it very clear why withdrawal of Russian troops and fighters from the Ukrainian territory and disarmament of illegal armed formations, as envisaged by the Minsk agreements, are of crucial significance for re-establishing the environment of respect for human rights and free expression which are indispensable for progress on political aspects of the settlement.

Distinguished colleagues,

Russia’s involvement into the conflict it instigated and continues to fuel in Donbas has yet again been put into spotlight, when a subversion and reconnaissance group of six persons, including two Russian citizens, was identified and neutralized by Ukrainian servicemen near the contact line in Donbas on 24 June, in the first day of the so called “harvest ceasefire” agreed for the period from 24 June to 31 August 2017 by the Trilateral Contact Group on 21 June.

It is not surprising that in this case Moscow sticks to its usual practice to dissociate itself from detained Russian soldiers. While sufficient evidence exist to identify captured Russian citizen Viktor Ageyev as a member of the Russian Army, including the accounts of his own and his mother, the Russian Defence Ministry claimed that Ageyev had been transferred to the military reserve in May 2016 with a special entry made on the second page of his military ID. I invite the members of the Permanent Council to get acquainted with the pictures of the military ID of Viktor Ageyev, posted yesterday and bearing no signs of changing his status as an active serviceman. The investigative actions in relation to the detained Russian serviceman are underway and we will inform the Permanent Council of all established facts of the criminal activities of the Russian Army on Ukraine’s territory.

Despite the ceasefire agreement, the security situation in Donbas remains volatile, as stated by the SMM in its weekly report of 28 June. The militants continue firing the military positions and residential areas along the contact line and holding live-fire exercises inside the security zone in violation of the TCG decision as of 3 March 2016, as stated in the SMM report of 1 July.

As we have been emphasizing in the previous meetings of the Permanent Council, the ceasefire violations by Russia-backed militants in Donbas are always combined with the on-going obstructions by the Russian side to the full, safe and

unhindered freedom of movement and access of the SMM monitors in the areas under Russia's effective control, as Russia does not want transparency which would reveal the full picture on the ground. The SMM weekly report of 28 June states that in addition to restrictions of the SMM's freedom of movement due to observed or potential presence of mines and UXO, the Mission's freedom of movement was restricted 18 times, which included 17 instances in areas outside of government control and only one instance in areas controlled by the Government. This report provides a clear picture of persistent restrictions of freedom of movement in non-government controlled areas, including the prohibition issued by a Russian officer of the JCCC for the SMM to travel to the border area without written permission from the militants from Donetsk. The same developments take place in July: the single SMM report of 3 July informs on 5 cases of denial of access, all of them in non-government controlled areas of Donbas (Novoazovsk, Pokrovske, Oleksandrivka, Staromykhailivka, Kadiivka), in addition to those related to disengagement areas and mines/UXO. The report of 4 July also refers to the denial of access only near non-government controlled Novoazovsk, when a militant prevented the SMM from crossing the checkpoint, citing orders from his supervisor.

The resolve of the Russian side to prevent the SMM from providing the full picture on the ground became also clear after a new forward patrol base was opened by the SMM in government-controlled Popasna to house a group of monitors in order to conduct more efficient and sustained monitoring of the security situation near the contact line. In a few days, the SMM had to temporarily relocate from this forward patrol base on the morning of 30 June after Popasna and its outskirts have been fired on the night of 29-30 June from mortars and automatic-grenade-launchers, as stated in the SMM report of 1 July. The efforts to blind the SMM continued on 3 July, when the SMM lost contact with its mini-UAV near non-government-controlled Slovianoserbsk.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Russian side does not stop its political persecutions under far-fetched allegations of Ukrainian journalists, public figures and eminent representatives of national minorities, both in its territory and in the temporarily occupied Ukraine's Crimea. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine strongly condemned the decisions of the Russian authorities to extend the preventive measures in the form of detention against Akhtem Chiyhoz, Deputy Chairman of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people, until 8 October 2017, and against Ukrainian journalist Roman Sushchenko, until 30 September 2017.

We urge the Russian Federation to immediately release Akhtem Chiyhoz, Roman Sushchenko and many other Ukrainian citizens illegally detained by the Russian authorities, including occupation ones in Crimea, and to cease lawlessness, human rights and fundamental freedoms abuses, and politically motivated persecutions aimed at silencing the dissenting voices.

As Russia continues its practice of systematic unmotivated rejections of appeals of Ukrainian consuls on granting them permits to visit the Ukrainian political prisoners, we consider this to be a blatant violation of the international commitments

assumed by the Russian Federation, and a deliberate attempt to conceal the unlawful interrogation practices and the methods of psychological pressure towards the citizens of Ukraine.

We urge Russia to stop its aggression against Ukraine, to implement in good faith its commitments under the Minsk agreements, and to reverse the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula, which remains an integral part of Ukraine. As that is still not the case, we appreciate the recent decision of the European Council of 28 June 2017 to prolong the economic sanctions targeting specific sectors of the Russian economy until 31 January 2018 linked to the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.