



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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Statement on “Russia’s ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea”

As delivered by Ms. Yevheniia Filipenko,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1176th meeting of the Permanent Council,
15 February 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

This week marked three years since signing of the Minsk Package of measures, which together with the Minsk Protocol and Memorandum of September 2014 formed the framework for peaceful resolution of the conflict in Donbas started by Russia’s aggression. By signing the Minsk agreements Russia undertook commitments which have been and remain ignored by the Russian authorities. Russia continues to make every effort to escape responsibility for putting an end to the violence it fuels. Meanwhile, on the ground the armed conflict continues to bring new casualties and devastation on a daily basis, without any distinct improvements. The report presented by the Chief Monitor Ambassador Apakan to the Permanent Council a week ago states that the number of ceasefire violations recorded by the SMM along the contact line between 24 November 2017 and 31 January 2018 was about 75 per cent higher than in the previous period, whereas the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons increased by 120 per cent. The weekly SMM report of 7 February indicates the increase of ceasefire violations by 30 per cent, while in some areas the levels of violence grew to those before the 23 December recommitment to ceasefire.

The harsh reality is that Russia is not willing to abandon its aggression, demonstrates contempt for the norms and principles of international law and keeps undermining the process of peaceful resolution. The Russian weapons continue to be supplied uninterrupted through the segment of the border with Ukraine controlled by Russia and its occupation administration. On 7 February, another Russian military “Orlan-10” UAV has been downed by the Ukrainian Armed Forces, the fourth one in only six weeks. The Russian military actively use these UAVs for reconnaissance and targeting the attacks. The Russian armed formations impose forced conscription in the occupied parts of Donbas: the SMM reported from the Luhansk region requests to “male residents to conduct a medical examination in order to be registered in a database of the armed formations”. New checkpoints and military positions are established, as it was registered by the SMM, in particular, on 9 February in Dovhe.

Overall, the certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine undergo a transformation by the Russian Federation into a large military outpost, accompanied

by denial of basic human rights and freedoms and severe restrictions on contacts with the outside world, except Russia. Notably, the SMM continued to report on the instructions issued by the Russian occupation administration to certain groups of people to refrain from leaving the occupied areas of Donbas to the government-controlled territory of Ukraine. Members of the Russian armed formations, medical staff, and superiors at schools are banned from communicating with the SMM patrols to avoid more exposure of Russia's role in the conflict. To suppress discontent of the local population the Russian occupation administration in Luhansk announced the resort to so-called "preventive detentions" of up to sixty days, thus making public their practices of hostage-taking.

Distinguished colleagues,

As stressed by many delegations in the last meeting of the Permanent Council, the SMM remains our eyes on the ground in the conflict area in Donbas. As stated by Ambassador Apakan in his report, the Mission "will need to count on the political support of the 57 participating States to ensure that the sides are reminded of their responsibility for the safety and security of the SMM." The same report clearly states that "restrictions, aside from those posed by the possible presence of mines and UXO, occurred almost exclusively in areas outside government control, which included aggressive behaviour, intimidation and hostile actions toward the SMM – both personnel and assets." We share the call by Chief Monitor and urge the Russian Federation to assume its responsibility for the safety and security of the SMM in the Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine. We urge Russia to lift restrictions imposed on the SMM and put an end to any form of intimidation or harassment of the SMM monitors.

Unfortunately, it has not been the case until now. The weekly SMM report of 7 February has again registered the overwhelming majority of non-mine related restrictions in the non-government-controlled areas (11 out of 13). The members of the Russian armed formations were preventing the SMM patrols from proceeding along their routes, checking their trailers and fired "warning shots" because "the SMM had stopped in an area where it was not allowed" near non-government-controlled Verkhnohshyrokiivske. It was yet another serious incident when members of the Russian armed formations used firearms to threaten the civilian unarmed monitors. A matter of utmost concern is that the frequency of such incidents is growing in the environment of impunity created by Russian military command for its fighters in Donbas. The absence of clear reaction to such unacceptable incidents from Moscow and the Russian delegation is telling about their true attitude to supporting the SMM. We emphasise that Russia must realize its responsibility and undertake the necessary measures as the party to the Minsk agreements to ensure safety and security of the monitors.

Distinguished colleagues,

In the PC meeting of 21 December 2017, immediately after Russia had unilaterally withdrawn its officers from the JCCC, the delegation of Ukraine emphasized that this decision will further worsen the humanitarian situation in the

conflict-affected region, making it even more difficult to carry out the necessary repair works of critical civilian infrastructure. The SMM report presented by Ambassador Apakan has confirmed that “following the departure of Russian Federation Armed Forces officers from the JCCC, a number of important repair projects stalled while waiting for responses, overwhelmingly from those in effective control in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk region”.

Furthermore, the report states that “the Russian departure has hindered the Centre’s ability to fulfil the tasks assigned to it” on ceasefire, mine action and response to impediments to SMM monitoring. We urge the Russian side to refrain from unilateral steps deteriorating the security and humanitarian situation in the areas it has occupied in Ukraine, and to embark in good faith on the path of a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

There is an urgent need for resolving pressing humanitarian issues. Two days ago the President of Ukraine spoke to the Russian President and encouraged release of hostages and illegally detained persons. The partial release in December happened only when Moscow let it happen. The finalization of the release, including the Ukrainian citizens illegally detained in Russia and in the temporarily occupied Crimea, would indicate an important benchmark for progress in resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. We also expect support by the Russia Federation of the initiative to establish together with the ICRC a trilateral mechanism for search of the missing persons.

Mr. Chairperson,

The political persecutions by the occupation authorities in the Crimean peninsula do not have any signs of easing.

On 11 February, the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation detained a citizen of Ukraine Kostiantyn Davydenko in the city of Simferopol under far-fetched accusations of espionage. Accusing of espionage, planting drugs or ammunition has become a well-tried method of suppressing anyone who opposes the occupation.

The developments and continuing grave human rights violations in the peninsula underscore an urgent need for establishment of a permanent international human rights monitoring, including by the OSCE, and we call upon the Russian Federation to allow such monitoring on the ground.

We again urge Russia to reverse the illegal occupation of Crimea and Sevastopol, and to stop its aggression against Ukraine, including by withdrawing its armed formations from the Ukrainian territory and fully implementing its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.