



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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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 1147th meeting of the Permanent Council,
25 May 2017

Mr. Chairman,

The developments in the Donbas region of Ukraine prove that the Russian military aggression against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine continues unabated. According to the last SMM weekly report of 17 May, the security situation in eastern Ukraine deteriorated during the previous week with the number of ceasefire violations recorded by the SMM increasing by 75 per cent compared to the week before. Recorded levels of violence increased in all five major hotspots along the contact line. In the past week, between 17–23 May, the hybrid Russian forces violated ceasefire regime 304 times, one third of them with the use of Minsk-proscribed heavy weapons. As a result, 26 Ukrainian servicemen were wounded.

The shellings by the hybrid Russian forces continue to target the residential areas and critical civilian infrastructure. On 18 May, a mortar shelling of the village of Berdianske completely destroyed two private houses and seriously damaged several other. Later that day militants shelled the residential sector in the village of Shyrokyne. On 21 May, the Donetsk water filtration station was once again fired at by 120mm mortars from non-government controlled Yasynuvata. On two days this week Avdiivka was shelled with MLRS “Grad”. The hybrid Russian forces maintain denial of security guarantees for restoration of civilian infrastructure despite numerous calls of the Ukrainian side within the JCCC. Phenolic plant in Novhorodske, earth dam of agricultural enterprise in Novoluhanske, gas distribution station in Marinka, water pipe of Avdiivka Coke Plant and many other infrastructure objects remain out of order for months due to unwillingness of the Russian side to alleviate the plight of the civilians suffering from the Russian military aggression.

To sustain a climate of fear among the civilians living in the conflict-affected areas of Donbas, the Russia-backed illegal armed formations, alongside with intimidation, persecutions and shellings, continue to push international humanitarian organizations out of the occupied parts of Donbas. On 19 May, the militants fired in the vicinity of the ICRC representatives who were dispensing food and health-related items in non-government controlled Dolomitne. Whereas prior to this visit the

Ukrainian side of the JCCC provided security guarantees for ICRC, the Russian side of the JCCC and the hybrid Russian forces left the request without response, thereby dismissing any obligation to care about the needs of civilians and the respective activities of international humanitarian organizations.

Distinguished colleagues,

As before, the crimes committed by the hybrid Russian forces in Donbas continue to be enabled by the ongoing flow of Russian weapons, ammunition, fighters and troops through the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. During the last weekend, in Donetsk region a company of surface-to-air missile systems “Osa” was observed in the north of the city of Makiivka moving towards Krynichna. In Luhansk region, two convoys of military type trucks and armored vehicles full of Russian soldiers dressed in military uniform with insignia of local militants were on the way through Khrustalnyi towards Pereval’sk. Before that, on 20 April a group of 100 Russian servicemen arrived by train to Rovenki from the town of Kolonna in Moscow oblast and on 25 April a large group of Russian Cossacks was sent by Russian command to Donetsk. On 4 May Luhansk train station received ten carriages with ammunition and fuel, on 7 May Rovenki train station received 16 cisterns of fuel and lubricants (nearly 960 tons). The OSCE observers at the Russian border check-point of Gukovo regularly report about hearing the movement of heavy train loads on a nearby rail-track, which they cannot physically see. To expose these movements we wish to indicate that on 10 May 20 cisterns of fuel and lubricants (nearly 1200 tons) were delivered through this rail-track to Rovenki train station.

Russia continues to use Donbas as a testing ground for modernized Russian weapons, so often boasted about by the Russian authorities. In this context we will mention the combat testing by artillery units of the regular Russian armed forces of new high-precision artillery munitions (new corrected artillery shells of 152 mm caliber and guided mortar mines of 120 mm caliber).

The current situation underscores that whereas Moscow claims the need to implement the Minsk agreements, it continues at full gear its activities of sustaining the conflict in Donbas through the established command, control and supply chains. Moscow continues to make political declarations on peaceful resolution as a diplomatic cover for ongoing aggression against Ukraine. There must be no illusion about what drives Moscow’s obstruction of transparency and permanent OSCE monitoring and verification at the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border, as envisaged by Minsk agreements. This morning another Russian so called “humanitarian convoy” encroached into the Ukrainian territory, violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and principles of international humanitarian law.

In these conditions it remains critically important to maintain international pressure to make the Russian Federation implement the undertaken commitments, in particular on establishment of a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire, and withdrawal of its forces from Donbas, both regular and irregular.

Mr. Chairman,

The SMM must be able to have unhindered freedom of movement in safety and security to perform its mandate. We expect the Russian Federation to exercise its responsibility for establishment of the necessary operational environment for the SMM in areas of Donbas which are under effective Russia's control. The mandate of the SMM was agreed by all participating States, including the Russian Federation, and reaffirmed in the Permanent Council Declaration of support for the SMM, adopted on 27 April. However, the SMM continues to encounter significant limitations in the occupied areas that impede proper monitoring and deprive the OSCE of comprehensive information about developments on the ground. The access of SMM observers is denied or hindered, the patrols encounter threats and intimidations, escorts and restrictions are imposed on their visits. The SMM weekly report of 17 May again pointed out to the predominant majority of both restrictions of the Mission's freedom of movement and weapons in violation of the respective withdrawal lines in the non-government controlled areas of Donbas. The SMM patrol was again threatened on 17 May near Bezimenne where a Russian hybrid fighter was shouting and waving a stone and a piece of metal towards the SMM. The individuals responsible for earlier serious incidents of threats, intimidation and harassment of SMM monitors have not yet been identified and taken to account. The Russian Federation, which started the conflict, bears its responsibility for this unacceptable situation. We call on Russia to make sure that the hybrid Russian forces in Donbas remove all impediments that stand in the way of fulfillment by the Mission of its mandate.

Yesterday at the TCG meeting the Ukrainian representatives raised issues and put forward proposals which are key for progress in peaceful resolution. We note with disappointment the comments by Russia's representative immediately after the meeting, indicating continuous lack of political will on the Russian side to implement the undertaken commitments.

Distinguished colleagues,

The human rights situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, illegally occupied by Russia, remains a matter of deep concern. We condemn the targeted and persistent repression by the occupation authorities of those, who oppose the illegal occupation of the peninsula. Last week the Russian occupation authorities prevented Crimean Tatars from conducting deportation commemorative events in Bakhchisaray, continued a show trial of Ukrainian journalist Mykola Semena. We condemn yesterday's extension of detention of the Ukrainian farmer Volodymyr Balukh who was thrown in jail last year on fabricated charges after displaying a Ukrainian flag on his private house.

In the last Permanent Council we drew attention to the ongoing politically-motivated persecution of Deputy Chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis Ilmi Umerov. Another prominent representative of the Crimean Tatar people, Deputy Chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis Ahtem Ciygoz, is also behind bars enduring persecution of the occupation authorities. This week the occupation court rejected the

request of his defence to question as a witness the Chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis Refat Chubarov.

Exactly a year ago Ervin Ibragimov, member of the Executive Committee of the World Congress of Crimean Tatars and member of regional Mejlis, was kidnapped in Bakhchisaray. His fate and whereabouts remain unknown since then. In his statement from detention, Deputy Chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis Ahtem Ciygoz put responsibility on the Russian occupation authorities “for the actions of bandits who commit crimes against our compatriots today”.

Since the beginning of illegal occupation of Crimea by Russia, more than 20 activists, mostly Crimean Tatars, have been reported missing.

We again urge the Russian Federation, as an occupying power, to take responsibility for stopping all human rights violations on the peninsula and to allow free and unconditional access for permanent international monitoring in Crimea.

We call on the OSCE Chairmanship and the OSCE Institutions to use all assets at their disposal for distant monitoring, documentation and reaction to human rights situation in the illegally occupied Crimea.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Russian Federation remains in clear, gross and uncorrected violation of OSCE principles and commitments, in particular concerning respect for sovereignty, political unity and territorial integrity of States and inviolability of frontiers. The grave violations of the European security order are a result of deliberate policy and actions of the Russian authorities and therefore it must remain a security priority to make Russia reverse its aggressive course and restore its respect for the Helsinki Final Act principles and commitments enshrined in the Paris Charter for New Europe. We urge Russia to implement the undertaken Minsk commitments and reverse the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol which are an integral part of the sovereign territory of Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.