



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

PC.DEL/356/17

17 March 2017

ENGLISH only

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

As for delivery by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1137th meeting of the Permanent Council,
16 March 2017

Mr. Chairman,

In the past six weeks we placed the focus of our attention on the sharp degradation of security around the town of Avdiivka which was triggered by the military offensive and attacks of the hybrid Russian forces, resulting in the growing toll of casualties and human sufferings of the population affected by constant shelling and the loss of supply of electricity, water and heating. The attacks continue unabated with the only difference that the Russia-backed illegal armed formations may choose to increase or decrease their intensity on a given day. As promised by Kremlin, these hybrid forces do not experience any shortage of supply of all sorts of ammunition.

On 11 March the intensive shellings by the illegal armed formations again disrupted the power supply to Avdiivka, the Donetsk water filtration station and the Avdiivka coke plant. As reported by the SMM, on that day the hybrid Russian forces denied access of the OSCE monitors to the area from where they could effectively observe and report on findings. The next day, on 12 March, the Russian proxies refused to provide security guarantees for repair works and shelled the vicinity of Avdiivka from MLRS BM-21 Grad. Only on 13 March the repair teams were able to reach out and restore the power supply to dozens of thousands of people. However the next day, on 14 March, these people were again to find out that the supply was again disrupted by the fire of the hybrid Russian forces.

Only this one case conspicuously demonstrates the utter contempt of the hybrid Russian forces for the people, living alongside the contact line in Donbas, and their needs. It is a deliberate strategy of building up pressure on the population by regularly pushing it to the brink of a humanitarian disaster. The Kremlin did not have any sympathy for the affected people before, and there is no sign of it now.

Distinguished colleagues,

As registered in the SMM reports, the hybrid Russian forces use the Minsk-proscribed heavy artillery along the entire contact line. Apart from regular shelling from artillery, mortars and tanks, they also employ multiple-launch rocket systems to

increase the lethal and destructive impact of their attacks. Notably, the SMM monitors registered the damage caused by shelling from multiple-launch rocket systems in government-controlled Sartana 15km northeast of Mariupol (report of 11 March) and Mykolaivka 40km south of Donetsk (report of 13 March), as well as reported on outgoing fire from “Grad” systems from non-government controlled Kadiivka 50km west of Luhansk (report of 13 March).

As in the past, the hybrid Russian forces continue to resort to a criminal practice of delivering their heavy weapons’ attacks from residential areas. On 10 March, for example, intensive shellings were carried out by the hybrid Russian forces from their position located in the school yard in Kirovsk, Luhansk region. The SMM report of 13 March informed about the fresh tracks of armoured vehicles in Yasynuvata, again confirming the use of heavy weapons by the hybrid Russian forces in the densely populated residential areas. These cynical minds view it as a win-win for themselves: from the cover of residential areas they inflict damage and provoke response fire, having a strong interest in creating new scenes for Russian propaganda. The Ukrainian Armed Forces make every effort not to let them achieve their aim.

Mr. Chairman,

During the recent briefings in Vienna the SMM Deputy Chief Monitor Alexander Hug presented a detailed information on the increased pressures on the SMM activities in the occupied areas of Donbas. We note with concern that restrictions, impediments, intimidation and hostile information campaign continue, significantly undermining the ability of the mission to perform its mandate, agreed by all participating States, including Russia.

The single SMM report of 11 March informs of the two cases, when the monitors were denied access and encountered an aggressive behavior of the Russian hybrid fighters. Near Veselohorivka (64km west of Luhansk) the SMM was stopped when approaching four tanks T-64, while near Markyne (49km north-east of Mariupol) the monitors were denied access to the compound, from which the relatively fresh tracks of heavy vehicles were observed. The similar denials of access took place on 12 March, when the SMM noted tracks of tanks and armoured vehicles in non-government controlled areas near Zhovte (17km north-west of Luhansk) and Oleksandrivsk (10km west of Luhansk).

As witnessed in the past, after a series of incidents of deliberate intimidation of monitors in the occupied areas, the hybrid Russian forces would set up a provocation to put the blame on the Ukrainian forces. This is the reality of dealing with the party which stakes on falsification of events as a major component of its aggressive strategies. Last week the SMM patrol came under mortar fire in non-government controlled Pikuzy (23km north-east of Mariupol), which was staged by the artillery battalion of the 9th separate assault motorized regiment of marines (Novoazovsk) of the so-called “First Army Corps of Donetsk”. This dangerous incident requires a thorough investigation by the JCCC to bring the perpetrators to account.

We witness a further unacceptable development that the local civilians in the occupied areas of Donbas are prevented by the illegal armed formations from speaking freely to the SMM monitors. The SMM reports of 10, 13 and 14 March

point out to the cases when the interlocutors refused to speak with the SMM, citing the need for written permission from senior so-called “LPR” members. These restrictions are indicative of the overall atmosphere of fear, instilled by the hybrid Russian forces.

Distinguished colleagues,

The failed offensive of the hybrid Russian forces on Avdiivka in the last days of January and the sharp escalation along the contact line were followed by Russia’s steps to further consolidate its grip over the occupied territory of Donbas and undermine the prospects of implementation of the Minsk agreements. These steps included recognition of the so called “documents” issued in the occupied areas, a switch to circulation of Russian rubles, the seizure of industrial enterprises which until March continued to operate within the framework of the Ukrainian legislation despite their location in the non-government controlled areas, announcements by Russia’s proxies of blockade of Ukraine and so called “border with Ukraine”. These steps were undertaken in deliberate breach of the Minsk agreements.

Last week we informed the Permanent Council that the Ukrainian authorities can maintain trade and economic interaction only with those enterprises that work under the Ukrainian legislation and that the Russian side is not preoccupied with dire economic and humanitarian consequences of its decisions and illegal actions. In view of escalation of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, including the seizure of Ukrainian enterprises by the hybrid Russian forces, yesterday the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine took a decision to temporarily suspend all cargo traffic across the contact line, except humanitarian aid, until full implementation of initial security provisions of the Minsk agreements, i.e. establishment of comprehensive and sustainable cease-fire and withdrawal of heavy weapons, as well as return to the Ukrainian jurisdiction of the stolen enterprises. The recent steps of Russia will also affect the operations in Ukraine of financial institutions with Russian capital.

Mr. Chairman,

In the meetings of the Permanent Council we regularly inform the delegations about the gross human rights violations taking place in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and city of Sevastopol illegally occupied by the Russian Federation.

On 13 March, the ongoing deterioration of situation in the Crimean peninsula has been again confirmed by the Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine (16 November 2016 to 15 February 2017).

The report highlights, in particular: extracting confessions through torture and ill-treatment and resorting to arbitrary psychiatric internment, selectively targeting specific groups; new cases of discrimination in access to work and to health care against those that have rejected Russian citizenship imposed by the 2014 decision of the Russian authorities; discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and identity; and interference in the conduct of the professional activities of lawyers. We urge

Russia to immediately stop the systemic human rights violations it has resorted to in Crimea.

Distinguished colleagues,

The last report of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine painfully reminds of the tragic human losses of the Ukrainian people in Donbas as a result of Russia's aggression against the country – at least 9940 persons killed and 23455 wounded. This enormous toll of casualties and fractured human lives underscores the undiminished imperative to maintain and increase international pressure to make Russia stop its aggression, implement the undertaken Minsk commitments and restore respect to the rule-based security order.

We once again urge Russia to return to the tenets of international law and reverse the illegal occupation of the Crimean peninsula which is an integral part of Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Additional remarks:

Mr. Chairman,

In connection with the reference in the statement of the distinguished Ambassador of Switzerland to yesterday's decision of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine I wish to provide some additional clarifications.

It was a forced decision in response to a chain of Russia's recent steps that contradicted the Minsk agreements and which included the recognition of the so called "documents" issued by illegal structures in Donbas; a switch to circulation of Russian rubles; the seizure of the enterprises that worked under Ukrainian legislation; declaration by Russia's proxies of the so called "border" along the contact line. The seized or rather stolen enterprises are worth billions of US dollars. The seizure also affected a large humanitarian centre in the occupied areas which in the last two and a half years provided humanitarian aid to hundreds of thousands of the local people in need. Now this assistance is not possible. Russia's actions in breach of the Minsk agreements left no options.

It was a decision on a temporary suspension of cargo traffic. The suspension will be lifted upon return of the stolen enterprises into the Ukrainian jurisdiction and observance by the hybrid Russian forces of the comprehensive ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons. These are legitimate demands fully consistent with the Minsk agreements.

The decision does not affect the civilian crossings across the contact line and delivery of humanitarian assistance. The Ukrainian authorities will continue to support opening of new crossing points, starting with Zolote where the respective facilities were ready since March of last year and the opening has been blocked by the hybrid Russian forces.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.