



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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Statement in Response to Ambassador Martin Sajdik, Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, and Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine

As delivered by the delegation of Ukraine
to the 1155th meeting of the Permanent Council,
20 July 2017

Mr. Chairman,

The Delegation of Ukraine warmly welcomes Ambassador Martin Sajdik, the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Special Representative, and Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, back to the Permanent Council and thanks them for their comprehensive reports.

It is the third time this year that we listen to reports of Ambassador Sajdik and Ambassador Apakan in the Permanent Council. It is a clear indication of the significance that resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict bears for European security and the urgency of the challenges that continue to stem from the ongoing Russia's aggression against Ukraine. We find as highly relevant to the situation the efforts of the Austrian Chairmanship to keep a permanent spotlight on this continuing conflict, started by Russia and taking place on the Ukrainian territory.

The SMM has long established a link between restrictions of the Mission's monitoring and ceasefire violations and other breaches of the Minsk agreements. Now the Chief Monitor again provided a detailed account of the on-going significant restrictions, impediments, intimidations and attacks taking place in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine which are under effective control of the Russian Federation. I would highlight some figures in this regard based on the SMM weekly reports: in the past nine weeks, since we last heard reports of Ambassador Sajdik and Ambassador Apakan on 11 May, the freedom of movement of the SMM patrols was restricted, in addition to restrictions caused by the observed or potential presence of mines and unexploded ordnance, 114 times in the areas not controlled by the Government and 12 times – in government-controlled Donbas. This tenfold difference is not only in the quantity, but in the nature of impediments: the Russia-backed terrorists resort to shooting, attacks or threat of force, as registered in dozens of the SMM spot reports, which does not happen in Government-controlled areas.

The sense of responsibility is also what puts into sharp contrast the attitude towards the SMM monitors in government and non-government controlled areas of Donbas. Whereas the Ukrainian military investigate those few incidents and take respective measures of legal proceedings and penalties for those involved, Russia and

its proxies in the occupied areas of Donbas instill the climate of impunity for numerous cases of attacks, threats, intimidation and seizure of OSCE property. The Russian side effectively defies the provisions of the Permanent Council Declaration of Support for the SMM adopted on 27 April by dismissing its special responsibility, as a party to the conflict and a party to the Minsk agreements, to hold the responsible to account.

Distinguished colleagues,

It is absolutely clear that without unrestricted and unimpeded monitoring by the SMM, there cannot be a verified improvement of the security situation and establishment of the conditions which are necessary for progress on the political track of the Minsk agreements. The unrestricted and unimpeded international monitoring is exactly what the Russian side consistently attempts to prevent to conceal the flagrant violations of the Minsk agreements by its hybrid forces in Donbas and the unabating Russia's logistical support of the illegal armed formations through the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. The single SMM report of 14 July registers, thanks to the use of UAVs, both a mortar hidden by netting in the centre of residential area of non-government-controlled Pikuzy, and the newly laid 14 anti-tank mines near the same Pikuzy only 80m from the closest house. On 16 July the SMM spotted six tracked military-type vehicles, including at least one APC (MT-LB), in Petrovskiy district of Donetsk city, as well as fresh tracks assessed as those of at least two tanks (T-72) about 3km south-west of the city centre. The SMM is prevented from establishing and reporting on where these at least two tanks in the Donetsk city arrived from or where they moved. What is known are the ongoing shellings by the hybrid Russian forces of the Ukrainian military, towns and villages and the growing toll of casualties. We condemn in the strongest terms the cynical practices of the Russian hybrid forces as they use the local civilian population as a human shield in their military provocations.

Mr. Chairman,

The Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine has raised the visibility of the OSCE as the security organization and serves as a good example of rapid response to the security crisis. It is now the largest OSCE field presence with an approved budget, exceeding 2/3 of the annual regular OSCE budget. Still, we need to be conscious that it is also a test for the OSCE, as the current significant limitations on the SMM activities imposed by Russia and its proxies in Donbas prevent the SMM from implementing its mandate and providing a full and objective reporting on the developments on the ground, in particular with regard to monitoring and supporting the implementation of all OSCE principles and commitments. Forced disappearances of civilians in Donetsk continue, with the recent incident of disappearance of blogger Stanislav Aseyev in early June who is now reported to have been added to the ranks of hostages; the servicemen and civilians in illegal detention of illegal armed formations are not granted access of international organisations, including ICRC; independent media reports point out to the operation of a network of camps with forced labour. These are just few examples of abhorrent human rights violations in

certain areas of Donbas under effective Russia's control which require full attention and reporting of the SMM.

We encourage Ambassador Apakan to be determined and persistent in maximizing the SMM's potential of effective implementation of its mandate, notwithstanding Russia's efforts at "blinding" the Mission and diverting its attention from its primary goals. I would reiterate Ukraine's request to enhance the technical capacities of the SMM (cameras, sensors, UAVs, including long-range) and make them operational as quickly as possible. The monitoring of railway hubs and main transport routes, all of them reachable by hard surface roads, remains highly relevant as Russia maintains the inflow of manpower, weapons and ammunition to fuel the violence along the contact line in Donbas. We welcome the opening of a new forward patrol base in Popasna on 24 June and encourage the SMM to step up the efforts on expanding the network of such bases. They are particularly most needed in the vicinity of the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border, from where the illegal inflows into the Ukrainian territory originate and taking into account the recent declaration of the Russia-backed militants on "a border area with a special entry-exit status" near Siedove.

We expect a focused attention of the SMM to a part of its mandate, regarding implementation of OSCE principles and commitments, and objective reporting from the ground on the consequences of such violations by Russia of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity as introduction of Russian currency and tax legislation, recognition of the so called "documents" issued by Russia's proxies, seizure of Ukrainian enterprises and many other unilateral steps undermining the implementation of the Minsk agreements. We encourage the mission to provide more detailed reporting on environmental consequences of the conflict, bearing in mind available information on likely ecological catastrophe in the Donbas region, triggered by the flooding of coal mines, and vulnerabilities of the objects of critical infrastructure, where the Russia-backed illegal armed formations deny security guarantees for the necessary repair works.

As the SMM mandate covers the entire territory of Ukraine, we expect the mission's monitoring and reporting on the situation in the Crimean peninsula, illegally occupied by Russia, where the local population, most notably Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars, face repressive policies and denial of their basic human rights and freedoms, which are inherent to every individual.

Distinguished colleagues,

The implementation of the Minsk agreements as part of the process aimed at putting an end to Russia's aggression, peaceful resolution of Russia-Ukraine conflict with full respect for the OSCE principles and restoration of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine in its internationally recognized borders is discussed in the Permanent Council every week for the last three years. We welcome the efforts of the OSCE, represented by Ambassador Sajdik, in the Trilateral Contact Group which includes Ukraine and Russia as parties to the conflict and OSCE as mediator, and expect the Russian side to assume its responsibilities and to fulfill its commitments. What needs to be done is well known. The ceasefire must be respected in full. The Russian occupation forces have to be withdrawn from the territory of Ukraine. The

SMM must be granted safe and secure access, including the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian border. All Ukrainian citizens held by Kremlin as hostages must be released. These are the steps agreed in and envisaged by the Minsk agreements, the implementation of which is obstructed only by the lack of political will on the part of the Russian leadership.

I wish to conclude this statement by once again thanking Ambassador Sajdik and Ambassador Apakan, as well as the entire SMM team for their efforts of contributing to reducing tensions and fostering peace, stability and security, which requires an end to Russia's aggression and restoration of its respect for the core OSCE principles and commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.