



**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 Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1183<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
26 April 2018

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The delegation of Ukraine joins other delegations in warmly welcoming the CiO's Special Representative Ambassador Martin Sajdik and the SMM Chief Monitor Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan back to the Permanent Council. We thank them for their comprehensive reports on the recent developments related to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Russia's ongoing aggression, flagrant violation of the OSCE principles and commitments continue to present a critical threat to Ukraine and to the European security. Every single day the Russian Federation breaches in a blatant manner the core OSCE principles such as respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, inviolability of frontiers.

**Distinguished colleagues,**

Today we honour the memory of the OSCE SMM member Joseph Stone. On behalf of Ukraine I again express the deepest condolences to the family of Joseph Stone and to our US friends. His tragic death a year ago was a profound shock to the entire OSCE community. It highlighted the high security risks, which the SMM patrols face daily in the Russia-occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, as well as the courage and dedication of the SMM staff in their efforts of contributing to peaceful resolution of the conflict. This conflict started by Russia has already taken away the lives of more than 10.000 people and left several times more wounded. Unfortunately, as witnessed during the past year, the tragic death of SMM member did not make Russia stop threats, attacks and intimidations directed at the SMM in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas, which continue on a regular basis. We underscore the responsibility of Russia for safety and security of the SMM in areas controlled by Russian occupation administration in Donbas.

**Ambassador Sajdik,**

We are aware of your challenging task of representing the OSCE Chairmanship in the TCG as a mediator between Russia and Ukraine in a situation where Russia

maintains denial of its responsibilities as a party to the conflict. This denial continues to be the major impediment to progress in resolution. We encourage you to be persistent in facilitating implementation of the Minsk agreements in their entirety, starting from a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire, withdrawal of forces and heavy weapons. Full implementation of all security provisions is necessary to enable the proper environment for further progress on political aspects. It has been the primary objective of the TCG Working Group on Security and it must retain the highest priority.

As Russia's armed intervention into Donbas continues to heavily rely on regular resupplies of manpower, weapons, ammunition and fuel through the Russia-controlled segment of the state border with Ukraine, we expect the TCG to attach priority attention to ensuring permanent OSCE monitoring and verification at the border as prescribed by the Minsk agreements. As the developments prove, the establishment of the Working Group on border issues within the TCG is long overdue.

In February, the last time our today's speakers presented updates to the Permanent Council, the delegation of Ukraine put an emphasis on serious environmental risks and challenges in Donbas stemming from the failure of the Russian occupation administration to act responsibly. Since then, these risks have further aggravated. Recent SMM reports confirm the intention of the Russian occupants to shut off pumps at the Yunkom mine in Bunhe by the end of April, which will lead to flooding of the mine and unpredictable consequences of radioactive contamination of drinking water. We expect the TCG Working Group on Economic Issues to expeditiously address this challenge and encourage the SMM to provide regular updates about the situation at the mine.

The total disregard by the Russian occupation administration for the local population in Donbas is captured in its attitude to provision of security guarantees necessary for repairs and maintenance of critical civilian infrastructure located along the contact line. As pointed out by Ambassador Apakan in his report, the departure of Russian Federation Armed Forces officers from the JCCC continued to impact these processes, as only 48 security guarantees for repair works were issued in the reporting period compared with 152 in the previous one. Clearly, the unilateral decision of the Russian Federation to withdraw from the JCCC had a multiple negative impact on the situation on the ground.

We took note of the assessment by the Coordinator of WG on Economic Issues Per Fischer, expressed at the informal meeting last Friday, that spring 2017 had particularly detrimental consequences for the WG activities. I would remind that Russia's creeping integration of the occupied territories of Donbas has greatly accelerated since 18 February 2017 when President Putin took the decision to recognize fake documents issued in Donetsk and Luhansk. It was followed by and combined with the introduction of Russian currency and tax legislation, the seizure of the Ukrainian enterprises in the occupied parts of Donbas, which made further trade relations with them impossible. One year after the situation has only worsened: the Russian occupation administration in Donetsk has cut off more than 1.5 million people from Vodafone mobile communication services, restricting their contacts with

relatives and complicating receipt of social security benefits in government-controlled areas.

The release of hostages on 27 December 2017 was, regrettably, the last tangible result of the TCG Working Group on Humanitarian Issues. Continuation of this process, as well as resolution of many other urgent humanitarian issues remain blocked by the Russian side. There is no meaningful progress on release of other conflict-related hostages and political prisoners, including those behind bars in Russia, on search for missing people, on opening of the Zolote crossing point and renewal of access of international humanitarian organizations to the Russia-occupied areas of Donbas. The resolution of these issues is an utmost humanitarian priority. It was made publicly clear that the last release of hostages was made possible after a personal consent of the Russian President. Other pressing humanitarian issues can also be speedily resolved if Russia decides to do so – not as a matter of political generosity, but a matter of implementation of Minsk commitments undertaken by Russia.

**Ambassador Apakan,**

Yet another report of the SMM underscores, regrettably, again that “the security situation in eastern Ukraine remained unpredictable and volatile.” The most recent recommitment to ceasefire failed 10 minutes after it started on 30 March, when the Russian armed formations shelled Avdiivka from the Minsk-proscribed weapons. Since that day, the level of violence has been growing. In the last 24 hours 8 Ukrainian servicemen were wounded and 3 were traumatized. The weapons used by the Russian armed formations in their attacks on Ukrainian positions included multiple launch rocket systems, artillery of 152 mm and mortars of 120 mm. The actions of the Russian side on the ground, be it ongoing attacks, or military resupplies through the border, or significant restrictions to the SMM monitoring show the lack of Russia’s interest in putting an end to the conflict. A two-fold increase of non-mine related restrictions of the SMM’s freedom of movement compared with the previous reporting period brought the total number to over 180 times, “of which all but 12 were in areas outside government control”. This is the factual evidence of the large scale of impediments set by the Russian occupants to the implementation of the SMM’s mandate. New restrictions have been introduced for the SMM’s access to border crossing points and Chervona Mohyla railway station in Russia-occupied border areas of Luhansk region, where the monitors spotted dozens of cargo railway wagons, some of them fuel tankers. There must be no doubt that the Russians fear transparency for a reason. Among many, a very telling example was registered by the SMM on 20 April when the mission’s UAV was targeted by about 50 shots near non-government controlled Novohryhorivka (33km west of Luhansk), whereas later the footage filmed by the UAV revealed the presence of four battle tanks (T-64) in violation of withdrawal lines.

Denial of access to heavy weapons holding areas, permanent storage sites and military compounds, denial of security guarantees for opening new FPBs, in particular in border areas, threats and intimidation campaign against the SMM monitors – the Russian armed formations continue to resort to a variety of means to “blind” the SMM.

Ambassador Apakan, we will continue to urge the Russian Federation to assume responsibility for the monitors' safety and security in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas and to lift all restrictions affecting the SMM's monitoring activities. In this context, we welcome the ongoing efforts of the SMM to improve its remote observation capabilities to mitigate and overcome the Russia-imposed restrictions. The long-awaited reintroduction of long-range UAVs is a major step in this direction. We expect it to considerably enhance the SMM's capabilities to monitor the areas adjacent to the Ukrainian-Russian state border in the conflict area, as well as main railway hubs like Chervona Mohyla and transport routes used by Russia to supply its armed formations in Donbas. We encourage the SMM to provide in its reports more information on the usage of long-range UAVs which are a costly equipment with significant technical capabilities to be effectively exploited. As the Russian occupation administration in Donetsk has already admitted using "technical countermeasures" against the SMM's long-range UAV, we remind the Russian delegation of Russia's Minsk commitments as well as responsibility for the assets that belong to the OSCE.

We took note of the statement included into Ambassador Apakan's report that the "SMM's ability to monitor and support respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to establish contact with civil society, ethnic and religious groups, and members of the local population in areas not controlled by the Government remains limited." We are confident that these limitations must not discourage the SMM from implementing this part of its mandate, because this is exactly what the Russian occupation administration has been trying to achieve. As there is little information on the current humanitarian, social and economic situation of the local population in the occupied parts of Donbas, we encourage the Mission to do its best to establish facts and report them to the participating States.

Whereas the Mission has highlighted some glaring violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Russia-occupied territories of Donbas, we regret to note that the Russian occupation administration continues preventing the SMM's ability to monitor in the Crimean peninsula. We recall that the mandate of the SMM covers the entire territory of Ukraine, which includes the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. In view of Russia's denial of access, we encourage the Mission to use the experience of other international organizations, which monitor the human rights situation in the temporarily occupied Crimea from the presence in mainland Ukraine. The SMM's Office in Kherson has possibilities for contacts with local population, some of whom moved from Crimea after the start of the Russian occupation and maintain communication with their families or friends who stayed in Crimea. The crossing point near Chonhar at the administrative boundary line between Kherson region and Crimea is also an appropriate place for contacts and first-hand accounts on a variety of human rights issues, which require adequate monitoring and reaction of the OSCE.

Concluding my statement, I wish to once again thank Ambassador Sajdik and Ambassador Apakan, as well as the entire SMM team for their hard and dedicated work of contributing to peaceful resolution of the conflict, started by Russia, and upholding the OSCE principles and commitments.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**