



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Statement on Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1336th meeting of the Permanent Council
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Madam Chairperson,

At the outset, I want to thank all partners for a principled position with regard to the State Duma elections the Russian Federation illegally hold in the temporarily occupied Crimea with the involvement of residents of the occupied areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Compelling Ukrainian citizens with illegally issued Russian passports to take part in these elections is yet another aggressive act against state sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. These are the very fundamental principles the OSCE and its participating States have to defend resolutely.

The results of these elections are null and void. We call on participating States to refrain from the contacts with illegally elected representatives of the occupying State, to prevent their inclusion into the Russian delegations to parliamentary assemblies, as well as to bring to accountability those responsible for the election preparation.

Furthermore, the conduct of such illegal elections is a step backwards in the implementation of the Minsk agreements by Russia as a party to the conflict.

As Minsk agreements clearly provide for, the elections to be held in certain regions of Donetsk and Luhansk only in accordance with the Ukrainian legislation and with due respect for OSCE standards and under OSCE/ODIHR monitoring.

The illegal elections also reflect a more general disruptive attitude of the Russian Federation aimed at further denying being a party to the conflict that remains a key stumbling block for any progress in the peace process, including in the N4 format as well as within the TCG.

Excellencies,

We are particularly concerned about compelling Ukrainian citizens to cast their votes in these illegal elections including under the threat of losing any means of living in the occupied territories.

This is an appalling example of how Russia has instrumentalized the restrictions on the movement across the contact line. The Ukrainian citizens in the occupied territories are just rightless hostages of the Russian geopolitical games.

Despite Ukraine's security guarantees in place, Russia continues to obstruct the opening of the two EECPs near Zolote and Shchastia. Dire consequences of the failure

by Russia to implement even this very specific humanitarian commitment are reflected in details in the thematic Report on Gender Dimensions of SMM Monitoring issued a few days ago.

Russia's imposed impediments together with ongoing flows of ammunition and personnel through the border have a negative impact on all civilians on both sides of the contact line, including on civilian casualties; damage to civilian infrastructure; the freedom of movement of civilians; as well as access to social and economic rights; basic services including education and health care; access to justice; to civil documentation; and to social benefits.

This particularly affects both the safety and dignity of women and girls and especially exposed them to hardships of the ongoing Russian aggression, which has been marked with increasing ceasefire violations over the last months. As reported by the SMM, in the period between 1 November 2018 and 15 June 2021, 89 women and 17 girls were killed or injured.

Let me also add that 60% of those 1.5 million Ukrainian citizens, who fled the Russian occupation of Crimea and Donbas, are women and girls.

As recent detention of the Crimean Tatars reminds us about more than 200 children, which are left without parental care in the occupied Crimea, thus, placing additional burden on Crimean Tatars women.

The one-exit policy introduced by the Russian occupation administration in the context of travel restrictions during the COVID-19 also severely restricted movement to and from Crimea for Ukrainian nationals. This is something to be in SMM's focus as well. We expect the Mission to follow up on its past thematic report regarding freedom of movement across the administrative boundary line with Crimea issued back in June 2015.

Dear colleagues,

We call upon the Russian side to adhere in good faith to the ceasefire regime, to cease the illegal supplies through the uncontrolled part of border, to withdraw military hardware and personnel from the territory of Ukraine so that the control over Ukraine-Russia state border will be reinstated.

We also stress once again on the unacceptability of intimidation of SMM personnel on the ground. Regretfully, however, the Russian side is too creative in derailing the SMM activities and restricting its operational capabilities. It is appalling both the questioning and attempted checking of monitors by the Russian armed formations at the Stanytsia Luhanska bridge on 15 September as well as anonymous placing of bomb on the SMM premises in the occupied Luhansk on 18 September.

As the OSCE Chairpersonship informed us earlier about the intentions to resume UAVs long-range flights at the end of September, which is a much welcomed and fully supported step, we call upon the Russian Federation to cease all illegal activities endangering the resumption of these flights. Especially, this goes about the use of jamming equipment and regular flights of the Russian UAVs "Orlan -10" we continued registering across the contact line on September 17, 18 and 19. Furthermore, on 19 September the Russian quadcopter dropped a grenade on the Ukrainian position leaving one our serviceman wounded.

In addition, we call upon the Russian Federation to stop opposing the implementation of Minsk protocol providing for permanent monitoring and verification of the Ukrainian-Russian state border together with the creation of a security area in the border regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

Also, in a view of existing restrictions and impediments to the SMM's activities, the issue of opening new forward patrol basis and enhancing Mission's technical capabilities should be prioritised on the OSCE's agenda even more. SMM's detailed and regular reporting on this particular effort would help us to have a target-oriented discussion in the Council in order to define gaps to be bridged on the way forward.

Excellencies,

Yesterday, in the occupied Kerch, in Crimea, a new small missile ship 'Askold' was heaved off with the participation in the ceremony of the commander-in-chief of the Russian Navy.

This is yet another illustration of the use by Russia of seized Ukrainian military industry enterprises in the occupied Crimea for the construction of warships, which further contributes to the build-up of forces and poses a threat to regional security and stability.

Under the guise of military drills like "Zapad 2021" Russia is mastering speedy re-deployment of its regular forces to keep them alongside the border of Ukraine and its occupied territories. Such a rapid militarization of the occupied peninsula signals that Russia has never given up the military option. It is the threat we have to address together.

To conclude, we, again, urge the Russian Federation to reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea, militarization of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, and to stop its aggression against Ukraine, including by withdrawing its armed formations, mercenaries and their hardware from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and fully implementing its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.