



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
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Statement on “Russia’s ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea”

As delivered by Mr. Ihor Lossovskiy,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1197th meeting of the Permanent Council,
11 October 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

Last week the delegation of Ukraine drew attention of the Permanent Council to the prolongation by the Ukrainian side of the term of applicability of the “Law on the peculiarities of local self-government in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions” till the end of the next year. This step has once again demonstrated Ukraine’s political will and commitment to the peaceful politico-diplomatic settlement of the conflict started by the Russian Federation more than four years ago. Implementation of the Minsk agreements is the agreed framework for restoring Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity in parts of Donbas that are presently occupied by the Russian Federation. Ukraine has done its part to the extent possible under the current circumstances by adopting a number of decisions providing political framework for the settlement as soon as the security conditions on the ground are met. We note, however, that so far not a single step has been taken by Russia to implement its part of the Minsk commitments, including on sustainable ceasefire and withdrawal of armed formations and weaponry from the territory of Ukraine. Moreover, Kremlin continues to pursue the course of further aggravation of the situation in total disregard of the Minsk commitments. In particular, yesterday the Russian state information agency TASS reported about a meeting that took place in Moscow between the assistant to the President of the Russian Federation V.Surkov and the present leader of the terrorist organization “DNR” where they discussed, quote, “issues of preparation for elections of the head and people’s council of DNR”. Reportedly, V.Surkov promised the increase of staff wages in the Russian occupation administration in parts of Donetsk oblast of Ukraine. We again emphasise it for the Russian delegation that the conduct of the so-called “elections” in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas will be a breach by Russia of its commitments under the Minsk commitments and will significantly undermine their further implementation. We urge Russia to abandon these plans which further compound the ongoing violations on the part of the Russian Federation. We urge Russia to cease the financing of terrorist activity and occupation administrations on the Ukrainian territory and, instead, fully

withdraw from the occupied parts of Ukraine – from Donbas and the Crimean peninsula.

Meanwhile, we are deeply concerned by a steadily high number of attacks executed by Russian armed formations in Donbas, which lead to a constantly growing number of casualties among Ukrainian servicemen and civilians. In its weekly report of 3 October, the SMM registered a 71 per cent increase of ceasefire violations, compared with the previous week. Dozens, sometimes hundreds in one single day, of tanks, MLRS, and pieces of artillery continue to be registered by long-range UAVs and aerial imagery available to the SMM, in known locations near Khrustalnyi, Buhaiivka, Shymshynivka, Kruhlyk, Myrne, and Manuilivka. We all know the reason why long-range UAVs and aerial imagery remain, effectively, the only monitoring option for the SMM in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas located further from the contact line and especially in the border areas adjacent to the Russian Federation. The Russian armed formations keep denying access of the SMM patrols to those areas, where they do not want the monitors to spot Russia's enhanced military presence, consequences for the local population, supply routes. Last week, they restricted 22 times the SMM's freedom of movement in non-mines related cases. This figure brought the overall number of restrictions, imposed upon the monitors by the Russian side since the beginning of this year in clear violation of the Mission's mandate, to seven hundred instances. The most severe and systematic restrictions remain in border areas, in particular at the border crossing points, as clearly highlighted in the SMM reports. Recently the Russian fighters started to deny access, saying that "the SMM's visit was not announced in advance", which is what they need to conceal illegal flows of weapons, ammunition and manpower across the international border.

Yesterday members of the Russian armed formations fired at the SMM patrol located near Kamianka to facilitate the operation of the Donetsk Filtration Station. The Ukrainian side of JCCC pointed out to the breach by Russian fighters of security guarantees as they knew exactly the regular location of SMM patrol. We strongly condemn such acts of intimidation of SMM monitors putting their lives at risk.

Despite unpredictability of Russia's military intentions and the ongoing hot phase of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the government of Ukraine keeps directing its efforts at mitigating the security and humanitarian implications of the conflict. With a view to reducing risks for civilians living in a conflict zone, the Ukrainian authorities continue humanitarian demining; some works were registered by the SMM in its recent reports, in particular near Pishchane and Lomakyne. Overall, in four years of the conflict, 29.000 hectares were demined, more than 400.000 explosive remnants of war were destroyed. We are grateful to all international demining organizations assisting Ukraine with accomplishing this challenging task. To raise public awareness, last week the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence uploaded on its web-site an interactive map of mined areas, which was prepared jointly with the mentioned organizations. We deem important the SMM's attention to the issue of access to education in the conflict-affected areas and encourage the Mission to continue close monitoring of dire humanitarian situation caused by the Russian aggression.

Mr. Chairperson,

Of growing concern is the escalation by Russia of tension in the Sea of Azov, where the Russian Federation stopped in the last 6 months over 200 vessels bound for Ukrainian ports of Mariupol and Berdyansk. As confirmed by the SMM in the recent report of Ambassador Apakan, these interruptions to commercial shipping caused economic and trade disruptions resulting in commercial losses for the ports employing thousands of people. These actions of Russia are inconsistent with its obligations under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and breach the navigational rights of Ukraine and of the flag States of the stopped vessels. We strongly condemn these actions of Russia, which create yet another dimension of the ongoing Russian aggression against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine.

Distinguished colleagues,

In this hall, we regularly raise the issue of Ukrainian citizens illegally detained by Russia and its occupation administrations on fabricated charges and judged in the absence of elementary standards of justice. They remain among the main victims of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, who continue to be exploited by Kremlin for its own political ends. In the last few days, Volodymyr Balukh received the final verdict of 4 years and 11 months in prison (merely for flying a Ukrainian flag above his private house in the occupied Crimea); Mykola Semena was banned from leaving the Crimean peninsula to mainland Ukraine for medical treatment; Roman Sushchenko was transferred to a prison colony; Oleg Sentsov was denied an appropriate medical treatment and forced to end his hunger strike after 144 days to avoid a torture of force-feeding. Over 70 Ukrainian citizens remain political prisoners of Kremlin. Two days ago the pre-trial detention of four Crimean Tatars, who had been arrested on trumped-up charges in Bakhchisaray in May 2016, was extended again until January 2019. We call upon the OSCE participating States to continue to firmly address this issue with the Russian side in bilateral contacts and in multilateral fora, seeking immediate and unconditional release of illegally detained Ukrainians.

The developments in Crimea prove that repressions and blatant violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the peninsula will continue until Russia reverses its illegal occupation. We again urge the Russian Federation to make this step and to stop its aggression against Ukraine, including by withdrawing its armed formations from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and fully implementing its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.