



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 Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1187th meeting of the Permanent Council,
31 May 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

Last Tuesday a video footage from the SMM camera at the Donetsk Filtration Station was presented at the SMM’s informal security briefing in Hofburg. It captured intensive shelling of Avdiivka by the Russian armed formations. It allowed to see the real meaning of reference of the SMM’s daily reports to “projectiles and explosions” and the scale of destruction and damage caused by heavy artillery to a frontline settlement, where people continue to stay four years after Russia started the conflict. Avdiivka, Svitlodarsk, Troitske, Mykolaivka, Kriakivka, Hranitne, Toretsk, Talakivka, Bohdanivka and scores of other locations are regularly shelled by the Russian proxies from the Russian weapons. On 18 May the Russian artillery targeted a private house in Troitske with a family inside, killing a boy of 12 years old and his father and seriously wounding other members of the family. On 28 May, a 15-year old girl was killed in the back-yard of her house in Zhelezne by a 122 mm shell, shot by the Russian occupation forces. The sad toll of casualties of Russian aggression against my country continuously grows. The Russian fighters do not have sympathy for the residents of Donbas, their provocations and shellings cannot be stopped and suppressed unless responded to. At the same time the command of Ukraine’s Joint Forces Operation reiterated in a statement of two days ago that the Ukrainian military have not targeted and will not target the Russian heavy weapons in residential areas that would endanger the civilians. In the meantime, the number of Ukrainian military casualties also continuously grows: in one month of May, 11 Ukrainian servicemen were killed and 87 wounded (as of 29 May 2018).

We share concerns of the SMM over the growing number of ceasefire violations, including a fivefold increase in the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons recorded by the Mission in its weekly report of 22 May. Of major concern remains the security situation in the wider area around the Donetsk Filtration Station, as also emphasised by Chief Monitor Ambassador Apakan. The Russian side uses near the station even such powerful and indiscriminate weapon as MLRS “Grad”. The SMM daily report of 17 May provided a detailed description of outgoing MLRS rounds in

flight from Russian positions in south-east to the Ukrainian government-controlled areas near the DFS in the north-west direction. On 21 May, the SMM registered outgoing rounds of automatic-grenade launcher from south to north, in a very close proximity to the DFS. Such shellings are witnessed day after day, with no end in sight.

There is little doubt that the Russian Federation resorted to deliberate escalation to back up its false narrative concerning Ukraine's change of the format of operation in Donbas to the Joint Forces Operation. The Russian attacks demonstrate glaring neglect to the needs of civilians in the conflict-affected part of Donbas. Whereas the Ukrainian side continues to provide permanent security guarantees to all objects of critical civilian infrastructure in Donbas, the Russian armed formations systematically violate them, causing further sufferings to the local population.

As underlined in the Statement by the MFA of Ukraine, which we distributed among the delegations last Monday, there is an urgent need for deployment of a UN peacekeeping operation in Donbas to ensure sustainable de-escalation on the ground and facilitate progress in the Minsk Agreements implementation.

Mr. Chairperson,

Such progress would be impossible in the current security environment in the temporarily occupied territories of Donbas, where the SMM continues to register large numbers of Russian Minsk-proscribed weapons, some of them in firing positions and in violation of withdrawal lines. We remind that those weapons were illegally supplied by Russia through the uncontrolled segment of state border with Ukraine. Let me draw attention to the SMM daily report released yesterday, 30 May 2018. This report registers that on one day of 26 May the aerial imagery revealed the presence of 155 tanks in 6 locations of the Russia-occupied parts of Donbas.

The Russian occupation administration is persistent in its efforts to "blind" the SMM by blocking its access to weapons storage sites, border crossing points and areas adjacent to the border with the Russian Federation. It is notable in this regard that all but three (23 out of 26) heavy weapons reported by the SMM as violating respective withdrawal lines in the areas outside of government control in the weekly report of 22 May were registered by satellite and long-range UAVs. These findings are extremely useful under the circumstances of systematic denial of access for the SMM and the lack of due monitoring environment in those areas. At the same time, the SMM patrols cannot reach government-controlled areas near the contact line not because of restrictions, but because of threats and unpredictability of military intentions of the Russian armed formations. The SMM monitors were again forced to follow up on reports of casualties, this time in Troitske, Mar'inka, Avdiivka and Krasnohorivka, by phone, as visiting those locations was impossible "due to security considerations". The SMM long-range UAVs were again jammed, this time on 16 May while "flying over an area near Horlivka" occupied by Russia, next day after they spotted tanks and IFV of the Russian armed formations in residential areas of Verkhnohorykivske and Pikuzy. On 25 May, "two armed men in military-style clothing prevented the SMM from accessing a location to assess a possible camera installation in Pikuzy". We note again a huge gap between Russia's declaratory

support to the SMM, its monitors and assets, on the one hand, and highly disturbing reality on the ground, on the other hand. Such behaviour is unacceptable. We urge Russia to stop it and deliver in good faith on the undertaken commitments.

Distinguished colleagues,

In the occupied Crimea, the Russian occupation regime continues its repressions against human rights activists, Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians. Politically motivated persecutions do not cease and innocent people continue to be thrown into jail on trumped-up charges. On 21 May, two more Ukrainian citizens Server Mustafayev and Edem Smailov were illegally detained. They joined the long list of Crimean Tatars facing charges under the Russian antiterrorist legislation widely used by the occupants to intimidate Crimean Tatars practicing Islam and to suppress any dissent. On 22 May the Russian occupation authorities forcefully transferred, in violation of international humanitarian law, four Crimean Tatars from Crimea to Rostov-on-Don. On 23 May, the Crimean Tatar people parliament – Kurultay – delegate Asan Egiz was detained and severely beaten.

The fate of dozens of victims of the occupation regime remains unclear. The 24 May marked two years since enforced disappearance of the member of the World Congress of Crimean Tatars Erwin Ibrahimov near Bakhchisaray. On that day two years ago street cameras captured the individuals dressed in the uniform of Russian traffic police force E.Ibrahimov into a van. He was not seen since then.

The cruelty, repressions and violence of the Russian punitive regime underline the urgent necessity of consistent international pressure to make Kremlin allow access of international human rights and non-governmental organizations, as well as the respective OSCE institutions, to the peninsula.

Increased international focus and pressure on Russia are also required to make it release the Ukrainian citizens who had been taken hostage by the Russian authorities. In protest against Russia's barbaric behavior Ukrainian film maker Oleh Sentsov is on hunger strike in Russian Siberian prison since 14 May, Ukrainian farmer Volodymyr Balukh is on hunger strike in a prison in Crimea. They demand release of Ukrainian political prisoners, there are at least 64 of them held by Russia. We again urge Russia to immediately release these Ukrainian citizens.

We also again urge the Russian Federation to reverse the illegal occupation of Crimea and Sevastopol, and to stop its aggression, 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.