



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 1348th meeting of the Permanent Council
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Madam Chairperson,

After the successful conclusion of the Ministerial Council, I want to start with the words of gratitude to all delegations for their unwavering support for Ukraine's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, including Crimea.

This support was perfectly translated into principled engagement in the drafting sessions, whether it be Ukraine's declaration or a decision on border monitoring, as well as strong statements during the MC plenary meeting in Stockholm, and of course throughout the year in this room.

Especially, we appreciate the enduring commitment of Albania, Sweden, Poland, and North Macedonia, as the previous, current, incoming, and future Chairpersonships, to work together on the restoration of respect for the imperative norms of international law and OSCE's fundamental principles, as reflected in both "quadriga" statements issued during the Ministerial.

Given that the Russian military build-up continues to raise serious concerns, such support is extremely important.

The total number of Russian and Russia-led forces along the border, in the occupied parts of Donbas and Crimea, comprises 115,000 troops, which includes 93,000 troops being present on the ground and 22,000 as naval and air components.

Russia has also increased reconnaissance activities in the Black Sea region and deployed 30 landing ships and boats as part of its Black Sea Fleet, increasing the strike capability five times, and the landing capabilities two times.

In parallel, Russia is reinforcing its armed formations along the contact line with 122-mm self-propelled artillery, tanks and infantry vehicles in violation of the withdrawal lines, while supplies of ammunition, military equipment, including electronic warfare, UAVs, fuel and winter lubricants are recorded through the border.

In the meantime, Russia continues to violate the ceasefire regime. From 1 January to 2 December 2021, Russian forces launched 2346 attacks against Ukrainian positions, leaving 65 Ukrainian soldiers dead and 261 wounded. 29 servicemen of the Ukrainian Armed Forces were killed by snipers.

Escalatory rhetoric of the Russian leadership and Moscow's demands to have a veto on Ukraine's sovereign right to freely choose its future and security arrangements are even more worrying.

The truth is that it is Russia who has been pushing boundaries and has been violating international law. Russia intentionally forgets to mention that the armed aggression was unleashed against my country in 2014 when Ukraine had non-block status anchored in the law and despite Russia's binding obligations under bilateral agreements and multilateral instruments to respect Ukraine's borders and not to use force against it. In the end, it appears that Russia's aggressive nationalism and

territorial expansionism continue destroying our hopes for comprehensive, cooperative, equal and indivisible security in the OSCE areas.

That is why it is Russia who has to guarantee that it will not continue its aggression against any country in the region and will reverse its occupations. It would be the best security guarantee for all.

In view of this, we appreciate each clear and strong political message aimed at demotivating Russia from any further destructive actions and engaging Moscow into diplomatic efforts.

Given this, we join all the calls on Russia to return to diplomacy, including within the N4 Format.

Let me remind that precisely two years ago, after the Normandy Summit in Paris on December 9, 2019, we had high expectations on a tangible progress towards resolution of this conflict or at least mitigating its severe impact on the conflict-affected civil population. Regretfully, its conclusions, especially on security, are yet to be implemented by the Russian side.

However, despite challenging security conditions and Russia's obstructionism, Ukraine has made everything possible to fulfil all its commitments laid down in the Common Agreed Conclusions of the Paris N4 summit.

Even just a week ago, on December 2, the Ukrainian Parliament once again extended a law on the special order of local self-governance in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.

These steps once again demonstrate Ukraine's commitment to the Minsk agreements and peaceful settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Excellencies,

Opening new crossing points along the line of contact in Donbas was, in particular, one of the Paris N4 Summit Common Agreed on Conclusions. Regretfully, even the existing ones do not function properly due to Russia's deliberate stance. 95 per cent decrease in the number of crossings, according to the SMM's recent thematic report, is striking. People in fact are deprived of their rights and access to basic services and benefits.

It is how it works. First – people are forcibly cut off their ties with Ukraine and coerced to take the Russian passport, then they are forced to cast ballots in the Russian election, and finally, Russia starts instrumentalizing them for new aggressive acts under the humanitarian pretext or to defend Russian passport holders.

Furthermore, Moscow continues incorporating the occupied areas into the Russian political space. A few days ago, the Russian party "United Russia" admitted 100 new members from Donbas, including the leadership of its occupation administration. It is not only another act against Ukraine's sovereignty and the Minsk agreements. It is also a vivid demonstration, whom occupation administrations represent – not the population of the occupied areas but the ruling Russian political party.

Apart from that, the closure of the contact line, continued ceasefire violations and cutting ties with Ukraine place additional challenges to the civilians in the occupied territories, since winter is approaching.

However, there is still a chance to improve the situation.

Upcoming Christmas holidays is the best time to move forward unless it is once again blocked with political agenda or conditioned by the so-called direct dialogue.

First, a so-called "Christmas ceasefire" must be enacted, as was the case in the past.

Second, we call to de-block the exchange of detainees, so they could celebrate with their families and beloved.

Third, making all EECs along the contact line fully operational and opening those near Zolote and Shchastia would be another important humanitarian gesture. Many families are waiting to reunite.

Fourth, the ICRC has finally to receive unimpeded access to detention facilities in the occupied territories.

Fifth, the finalization of mine clearance plan is long overdue. People deserve to feel safe on their native soil.

Sixth, the approval of additional disengagement areas would allow re-energizing the peace efforts.

Seventh, safe access and distribution of humanitarian assistance to those in need based on an international mechanism should be ensured.

Eighth, SMM must enjoy unimpeded and safe access. The practice of denials, especially in the Luhansk region, must be ended. It would also de-escalate the tension on the contact line.

Ninth, enhancing monitoring capacities of the SMM, including by opening new FPBs, stopping jamming of UAVs and so on, would allow the Mission to verify the ceasefire regime more efficiently and comprehensively.

Tenth, enhanced transparency in the border areas through permanent monitoring and verification by the OSCE, as foreseen by para 4 of the Minsk protocol, is much needed security-building measure. If Russia's military build-up poses indeed no threat to Ukraine as declared by Moscow, the SMM should be allowed to monitor areas adjacent to the border.

These steps could break the deadlock and bring much-needed transparency in military activities. To that end, we call on Russia to engage constructively in the discussion within the TCG.

Excellencies,

The occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea is the most serious challenge to our Organization and international security in general.

The human rights situation on the ground also deteriorates constantly. The political persecution of activists, lawyers and citizen journalists, national and religious minorities is a reality in Crimea.

On 3 December the so-called "Supreme Court of Crimea" illegally established by the occupation administration rejected the appeal of the First Deputy Head of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People Nariman Dzhelial (Dzhelialov) on extending the term of his detention. He will remain in custody at least until 23 January.

Ukraine continues its work to provide for the rights and needs of the population of the temporarily occupied territory.

Since 1 December COVID-19 vaccination with internationally recognized vaccines is available on the Chonhar and Kalanchak crossing points on the administrative boundary line with Crimea for the population of the temporarily occupied peninsula.

Most recently, on 7 December, the Ministry for the reintegration of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine issued an Order regulating the transfer of goods and currency over the administrative boundary line. The Order aims to simplify the process of crossing the administrative boundary line by civilians.

Using this opportunity, I would like to thank all co-sponsors and participants of the side event "Crimea Platform: a way forward" in the margins of the MC in Stockholm.

This displays our unwavering commitment to working together to return Crimea to Ukraine as well as to address the challenges associated with the occupation and defend the rule of law. It is a matter of re-building of trust and confidence within the OSCE.

We look forward to working further with the next Chairpersonship, distinguished national delegations and OSCE Secretary General to translate the Crimea Platform declaration into our common actions.

I am glad to inform that later today the United Nations General Assembly will vote on the fourth consecutive resolution on the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.

In the coming days, there will be also a final vote by the General Assembly on the sixth consecutive draft resolution on the human rights situation in Crimea.

Having said that, we suggest looking at how the OSCE, as a regional international organization, could contribute more to the implementation of the UN GA resolutions.

To conclude, we again urge the Russian Federation to stop its aggression against Ukraine, reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea, de-occupy certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and restore freedom of navigation in the Black Sea, through the Kerch Strait and in the Sea of Azov. Russia must fully implement its commitments under the Minsk agreements, including the withdrawal of its armed forces, mercenaries, armed formations, and weapons from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.