



**Statement on “Russia’s on-going aggression against Ukraine
and illegal occupation of Crimea”**

As delivered by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1107th meeting of the Permanent Council,
7 July 2016

Mr. Chairman,

Last week this hall hosted the 2016 Annual Security Review Conference. In the special session and other discussions the focus was placed on the ongoing Russian aggression as the main factor damaging the European security. The speakers called on Russia to restore respect to the OSCE principles and commitments, it has flagrantly violated by military invasion into Crimea and Donbas, and to engage in good-faith in peaceful resolution of the conflict on the basis of the Minsk agreements, the norms and principles of international law. We hope that Russia will hear these persistent calls of the international community.

Meanwhile, the situation in the conflict-affected areas of Donbas remains violent. The armed provocations by the combined Russian-separatist forces are registered along the entire contact line. Although the intensive shellings alternate with certain decrease of hostilities, the regular nature of these provocations maintains the escalation trend as dominating on the ground.

It is a matter of serious concern that we approach the second anniversary since the first Minsk documents were signed with initial security provisions remaining unimplemented by Russia and its proxies. Regular ceasefire violations by the Russian hybrid forces, often with the use of heavy weapons, remain the sad reality. Numerous exclusive Russian weaponry continues to be registered in use in the occupied part of Donbas. On 5 July in Mayorsk the Ukrainian positions were shelled by GRAD-P portable rocket launcher system.

As a result, the toll of casualties grows. During the first days of July 6 Ukrainian servicemen were killed and 33 were wounded in militants’ shelling, sniper fire and attacks by subversive groups. Under the circumstances of direct threat to their lives and lives of peaceful civilians the Ukrainian forces are allowed to open fire in response with the aim to halt provocations and provide for security.

We consider the disengagement of forces, confirmed and verified by the SMM, to be an efficient antidote to the above provocations. We welcome that the Trilateral Contact Group on 29 June followed up on the results of the recent meeting of the foreign policy advisors to the leaders of the Normandy Four, and agreed to launch the disengagement process in two pilot areas near Zolote and Petrivske. There is an urgent need to translate the agreement into practice. In this regard we are concerned that the agreed disengagement steps are now jeopardised by the Russia-backed illegal armed formations, which informed the SMM that they would prevent monitors' access to the area of Petrivske and the SMM UAV flights over there. We call on Russia to deliver on these agreed steps.

Distinguished colleagues,

We remain extremely concerned over ongoing attacks on the SMM and its equipment aimed at "blinding" the Mission and limiting its monitoring capabilities in the occupied areas of Donbas. In particular, on 30 June one more SMM UAV crashed in this area. Since May, when the first long-range UAV was shot down and the cameras in the Donetsk airport were disconnected by the combined Russian-separatist forces, we have directed our concerns and requests to Russia as a side, exercising *de-facto* military control throughout the occupied part of Donbas, to stop these unacceptable actions. However, these attacks continue.

We strongly condemn the practice of systematic impediments to the SMM activities. Over the past week the Mission reported on a number of incidents in the occupied areas of Donbas, related to denial of access and freedom-of-movement restrictions, including in the border areas. The incidents are often accompanied with gun threats to monitors as it happened on 2 July near Veselohorivka. Hostile attitude by the militants' chiefs towards the SMM was particularly noted by the Mission in its weekly report of 29 June.

We find unacceptable the persistent attempts to ban monitors' contacts with the local population in the occupied areas. Another such incident was registered on 3 July in Kominternove. We reiterate that the impediments to the SMM run counter to Russia's commitments under the Minsk agreements and call on Russia to ensure the SMM unhindered activities and access in the occupied areas.

Mr. Chairman,

The President of Ukraine, addressing the Parliament on the occasion of the Constitution Day, reiterated that establishing a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire remains a basic requirement for progress on other aspects of the agreements. Safe and secure environment, which will make agreed political steps possible, includes de-occupation of Donbas and disarmament of the illegal armed formations. Russian troops and weaponry must withdraw from the territory of Ukraine.

The problem of uncontrolled border remains critical for the prospects of the peaceful resolution in Donbas and must be resolved to pave the way to de-escalation. We need

permanent OSCE border monitoring and establishing security zones in border areas of Ukraine and Russia, as agreed in Minsk.

In order to address a wide array of border-related issues a specific working group in the TCG framework should be established. We expect the TCG to constructively address this issue at the next meeting of 13 July.

We remain convinced that deployment of an OSCE armed police mission would be a strong safeguard against armed provocations and a crucial contributing factor to the safety and security in the conflict-affected areas, in particular with regard to the election process.

Urgent progress is needed on the humanitarian track. We deeply regret that the TCG meeting on 29 June and the separate meeting of its humanitarian working group on 4 July produced no results in the process of release of hostages and illegally detained persons, which has now been blocked by Russia and its proxies for months. Ukraine reiterated its readiness for “25 to 50” formula as a first step to restore the release process on the basis of “all-for-all” principle, as agreed in Minsk. Unfortunately, no response has followed yet. ICRC has not yet gained access to the hostages.

We underline that the relevant provision of the Minsk Package of measures applies equally to the Ukrainian citizens, who are held in illegal detention in Russia. We call on Russia to take immediate steps to release all hostages and illegally detained persons as a high humanitarian priority.

Distinguished colleagues,

We consistently draw attention of the Permanent Council to the dire human rights situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, illegally occupied by Russia.

In this regard we welcome the firm position, taken by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly by adopting at its Annual Session in Tbilisi a Resolution on Violation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol. The Parliamentary Assembly reiterated that the actions of Russia in Crimea and Donbas are qualified as acts of military aggression against Ukraine, strongly condemned the illegal annexation of Crimea and all violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Crimean peninsula. The OSCE PA noted increasing repression, violence, and discrimination against the indigenous Crimean Tatar people and ethnic Ukrainians. It called on Russia to stop all violations and to immediately and unconditionally release the Ukrainian citizens, who have been unlawfully detained or imprisoned under fabricated charges by the *de facto* authorities in the occupied Crimea.

We do hope that the voice of the parliamentarians, representing democratic nations from across the OSCE area will be heard in Moscow. We also reiterate our call on Russia, as an occupying power, to take responsibility for stopping all human rights violations on

the peninsula, to halt repressions and to allow free and unconditional access for permanent international monitoring in Crimea.

Mr.Chairman,

These days Ukraine marked the second anniversary since de-occupation of Slovyansk and Kramatorsk. In April 2014 armed Russian subversive group under the command of Russian FSB officer Girkin-Strelkov entered the towns, seized police and administrative buildings and triggered the bloody conflict in Donbas. The local residents still shudder at the memories of terror and lawlessness which reigned in both towns during three months of occupation. Today, despite their proximity to the contact line, Slavyansk and Kramatorsk enjoy the peaceful life with safety and security for the population, functioning infrastructure and available services and social payments. It was only once since de-occupation, that the notorious “Russian world” reminded of itself by deadly shelling of Kramatorsk with Smerch MRLS on 10 February 2015. The attack resulted in killing 17 and wounding 65 people, including children.

Regrettably, millions of Ukrainians, living in occupied Crimea and Donbas, still suffer from the Russian aggression. Russia continues its “hybrid war” against Ukraine and the European peace and order. It therefore remains essential that the international community maintains its political and economic sanctions, which were imposed on Russia in response to its aggression against Ukraine, to stimulate Russia’s return to the tenets of international law.

We urge Russia to immediately take practical steps to implement its commitments under the Minsk Agreements, to restore its respect for the norms of international law and the OSCE principles and commitments, to halt its aggression against Ukraine and reverse the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

Thank you, Mr.Chairman.