



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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**Statement by the delegation of Ukraine
at the 1165th meeting of the Permanent Council**

23 November 2017

Mr. Chairperson,

On Tuesday, 21 November, Ukraine marked the national Day of Dignity and Freedom established in 2014 with the aim to pay tribute to the patriotism and courage of Ukrainian citizens who decisively stood up for democracy, human rights and freedoms, and the future of the country as a free European nation. Millions of Ukrainians took to the streets in the autumns of 2004 and 2013 to denounce corrupt practices, to defend their personal dignity and the nation's freedom to make its own choices about the future. In both instances the social upheaval was also caused by the impact of Russia's neo-imperial ambitions of restoring an updated version of the Soviet Union and its interference and attempts to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty, political unity and independence.

Faced with the unwavering quest for democracy by the Ukrainian nation and with the failure of economic and political coercion, the Russian leadership resorted to direct armed intervention into Ukraine, illegal occupation of Ukraine's Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, and hybrid warfare in Donbas. Kremlin's reflexes of sending troops and tanks to suppress the will of sovereign nations have not changed.

Despite the large-scale Russian aggression, which continues, Ukraine has survived as an independent and viable state and is taking strength through profound transformation of the country. We are grateful for the solidarity and steadfast support of our international partners at this time of unprecedented challenges for the Ukrainian state. With national resolve and international assistance we managed to rebuild Ukraine's armed forces and security services, to reinvigorate the democratic institutions, to strengthen the civil society and its impact on positive changes in all walks of life. We achieved macroeconomic stability, tripled foreign exchange reserves, set up an independent anti-corruption system, significantly improved public-sector transparency, cut public spending, returned to economic growth and increased social payments. The comprehensive outline of Ukraine's progress has been provided to the OSCE participating States and Partners in the high-level briefing "Transforming the country: Ukraine on the path of reforms" held in Hofburg on 24 March this year, and the process of transformations continues. This autumn, the

far-reaching pension, education and healthcare reforms were adopted, while the judicial reform produced new judges, including of the Supreme Court of Ukraine, who were appointed after an independent, open and transparent selection process.

As emphasised by President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko, “the ultimate goal of all the reforms in Ukraine is its full membership in the European Union.” The European course, defended by the Ukrainian citizens with enormous sacrifice during the Revolution of Dignity and since the beginning of Russia’s armed aggression, has become irreversible. This year the Ukraine-EU Association agreement took full effect. A landmark accomplishment, enabled by Ukraine’s internal reforms, was the establishment of the visa-free travel regime between Ukraine and the European Union. The EU became Ukraine’s largest trading partner, accounting for 41 per cent of its trade in 2017, compared to 32 per cent in 2013. The surveys of public opinion show that the predominant majority of Ukrainians support the goal of the country’s accession to the European Union. European values, democracy, market economy and the rule of law which underpin the foundation of the European Union retain their powerful attraction as the model for building and consolidating a successful and prosperous democratic state.

Dignity and freedom, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in a united family of European nations - this is what the Ukrainian citizens have always wanted and strived for. We count on continued support of the international community in fostering internal transformations in Ukraine and defending against external aggression.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.