



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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**Statement on “Russia’s ongoing aggression against Ukraine
and violations of OSCE principles and commitments”**

As delivered by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1092nd meeting of the Permanent Council,
10 March 2016

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I wish to thank the distinguished representative of France for presenting the views of the host country in relation to last week’s Normandy Ministerial in Paris. I will outline Ukraine’s assessments in our statement.

I need to start today with stating that the security developments in Donbas continue to be determined by the logic of escalation which the Russian Federation and its proxies are not yet ready to abandon. Hence, over the past week the situation in the conflict-affected areas has remained tense and volatile, with a large number of armed provocations and direct attacks against the Ukrainian forces and civilians.

256 cases of ceasefire violations by the combined Russian-separatist forces were registered between 3–8 March with 80% taking place in Donetsk direction – Avdiyivka, Pisky, Krasnohorivka, Svitlodarsk and outskirts of Horlivka. The heavy weapons, including multiple rocket launcher systems and heavy artillery, continue to be regularly used against the Ukrainian positions and the nearby residential areas. On 6 March, for instance, 200 mortar rounds were fired at the city of Avdiyivka, resulting in heavy damages of infrastructure and houses. Past week also registered provocations carried out by militants changed in Ukrainian Armed Forces-style military clothes.

The armed provocations increase the toll of casualties. 4 Ukrainian soldiers were killed and 16 were wounded between 2 – 8 March. Two of them lost their lives following the attack of a subversive group on the Ukrainian positions near Mariupol on 4 March. Such attacks are registered almost on a daily basis, mainly in the nighttime, along different sections of the contact line.

Distinguished colleagues,

The urgent need to stabilize security in the affected areas and make it comprehensive was the main message of the Ukrainian side at the last Normandy ministerial meeting in Paris on 3 March. This includes sustainable and comprehensive ceasefire, verified withdrawal of heavy weapons and unfettered OSCE monitoring throughout the conflict

area, including at the border with Russia. Minister P.Klimkin reiterated that de-escalation and stabilization require implementation of these initial security provisions of the Minsk Agreements.

Ukraine proposed to establish four demilitarized zones in areas of the highest security risks. International presence needs to be enhanced with proper mandate and sufficient capabilities to actively contribute to security in addition to SMM's monitoring and verification. We expect all parties concerned to constructively approach the issue, taking full account of the real needs on the ground.

The SMM's freedom of movement must be ensured throughout all areas of concern. A specific focus needs to be placed on uncontrolled sections of the border with Russia, roads and railway hubs, in particular those which reportedly serve as routes for military resupplies to Donbas. Until now the comprehensive monitoring and verification by the SMM have not been achieved due to serious restrictions on the occupied territories. We view these restrictions as unacceptable and reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to abide by its commitments on SMM's unfettered access and full freedom of movement.

Humanitarian provisions of the Minsk Agreements demand immediate implementation. We encourage Russia to act responsibly on the fact that destinies and lives of hundreds of people are behind our calls to speedily implement paragraph 5 of the Minsk Package of measures, providing for the release of all hostages and illegally detained persons, which includes also those illegally detained in Russia.

On the humanitarian grounds we also expect from Russia to take steps that would lead to lifting present restrictions on operation of the international humanitarian organizations in the occupied part of Donbas.

All of these measures are necessary and possible provided that Russia takes responsibility for implementing its commitments.

Mr. Chairman,

Ukraine reiterated in Paris its readiness to actively contribute to establishing the necessary conditions for holding local elections in certain areas of Donbas. The Minsk Agreements are clear about these elections: they must be held in accordance with the Ukrainian legislation, OSCE standards and under the OSCE/ODIHR monitoring. This means, in particular, safe return and voting rights for IDPs, participation of the Ukrainian political parties, free functioning of the Ukrainian media.

De-occupation and disarmament of the illegal armed groups are needed to establish a safe environment for a free expression of will of the local population in fair elections. Any imitation under the barrel of Russian and militants' gun will simply be a repetition of the farce of November 2014.

Until the proper security environment is in place it is hardly possible to contemplate any timeframe for those elections.

Distinguished colleagues,

Ukraine notes the 13th Report by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Ukraine, which is based on findings of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine and covers the period from 16 November 2015 to 15 February 2016.

The Report underlines that restoration of full effective control by the Government of Ukraine over the parts of the border with Russia in certain districts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions would be the key to ending any possible inflow of ammunition, weaponry and fighters from the Russian Federation. We share the concerns, expressed in the Report, on increasing risk of the resumption of hostilities in Donbas and the conclusion on the need to fully implement the Minsk Agreements as a way to ensure respect for the human rights. The Report once again testified to the large-scale crimes committed against Ukrainian citizens by the Russian occupation authorities in Crimea as well as by the combined Russian-separatist forces in Donbas.

According to the Mission, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar communities on the Crimean peninsula are subject to pressure and persecution.

The Russian occupation authorities take further steps for aggravating the situation by banning the Mejlis – a representative body of the Crimean Tatar people. We expect the OSCE HCNM to use its mandate to address this issue, endangering the rights of the indigenous people of Crimea. We reiterate our persistent call on Russia as an occupying power, to take responsibility for stopping all human rights violations on the peninsula and to facilitate free and unconditional access of the international monitors to Crimea. All international monitoring missions would benefit from being precise in highlighting the real role of the Russian Federation as its direct military aggression and illegal occupation serve as a root cause of the conflict and the human rights violations in Crimea and Donbas.

Ukraine takes the position of zero-tolerance to the human rights violations regardless of personalities and places. In this regard, we take serious note of the Mission's information on alleged abuses and violations committed by the representatives of Ukrainian military or security forces as well as of the recommendations provided. All facts reported will be subject to thorough check and investigation by the Ukrainian law-enforcement.

Mr. Chairman,

Unfortunately, we cannot register any signs of Moscow abandoning its aggressive course. It is therefore essential that the international community maintains its political

and economic pressure on the state-aggressor to stimulate Moscow's return to the tenets of international law.

I conclude by reiterating our persistent call on the Russian Federation to immediately take practical steps to implement its commitments on peaceful resolution in Donbas, undertaken in Minsk, and to exert its influence on the militants it supports to do likewise. Until now this has not materialized.

We urge Russia 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.