



**Permanent Mission of Ukraine**  
to the International  
Organizations in Vienna

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## **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 1203<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
22 November 2018

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Yesterday, on 21 November, Ukraine marked another anniversary of the national Day of Dignity and Freedom established in 2014 to commemorate the quest of Ukrainian citizens for democracy, freedom, rule of law, human rights and full integration into the European family of nations. These developments prompted our neighbour, the Russian Federation, to react in the only way it knows from the past to suppress the will of sovereign states to build their future independently from Kremlin. Ukraine faced direct Russian armed intervention and illegal occupation of parts of its territory: the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the city of Sevastopol, and certain territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. These hostile and aggressive actions of Russia continue till now.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

In the past three weeks, we faced a remarkable reluctance of the Russian delegation to provide responses to the questions raised by the majority of delegations in this hall on the incident with downing a long-range UAV belonging to the SMM. We know where it happened and who bears responsibility for the loss of this valuable asset. However, key questions remain about what the Russian Federation plans to do to provide for financial compensation and to ensure that the Russian armed formations in the occupied territories of Donbas do not target the SMM UAVs in the future. We again urge the Russian delegation to stop ignoring the legitimate requests of participating States and to engage constructively. Next week Ambassador E.Apakan will present his report to the Permanent Council. We encourage the Russian side to return immediately the wreckage of long-range UAV to the SMM, to ensure full compliance of its proxies in Donbas with the SMM’s mandate and to provide Ambassador E.Apakan and participating States with guarantees that such incidents will not happen again in the Russia-occupied areas.

The practical significance of the SMM technical assets, including especially its long-range UAVs, for implementing the Mission's mandate of monitoring is critical and undeniable. Following the lifting of temporary security restrictions put in place by the SMM on flights of long-range UAVs over the Russia-occupied territories of Donbas, these UAVs have immediately registered in those areas 35 pieces of heavy weapons in violation of withdrawal lines and 90 of them beyond withdrawal lines but outside designated storage sites, in one single day of 14 November. The same day, aerial imagery available to the SMM revealed 315 pieces of heavy weapons (tanks, surface-to-air missile systems, self-propelled and towed artillery, armoured combat vehicles) in well-know training areas of the Russian armed formations near Buhaivka, Shymshynivka, Kruhlyk, and Myrne. Those are SMM-reported numbers indicating the level of Russia's military involvement into the interstate armed conflict, which it started more than four years ago on the Ukrainian soil. The next day after the SMM registered these hundreds of pieces of Russian heavy weapons, the Russian delegation was delivering its false and absurd allegations on Ukraine's unwillingness to implement the Minsk agreements – agreements which specifically prescribe withdrawal of Russian troops, mercenaries and weapons from the sovereign territory of Ukraine.

In parallel with undermining SMM's technical monitoring capabilities able to register Russian military presence deep inside the Russia-occupied territories of Donbas, Moscow continues its intimidation campaign aimed at restricting SMM's access on the ground, especially in areas of southern Donetsk region near the border with the Russian Federation, as reported by the SMM.

### **Distinguished colleagues,**

High numbers of heavy weapons used by the Russian side to maintain the conflict require permanent replenishment of ammunition, fuel and lubricants. Only in the first week of this month, the Ukrainian competent authorities registered 38 cisterns, 60 tons each, with fuel and lubricants, which were illegally and discreetly supplied by the Russian side to its armed formations through the well-known railway transit hubs in Rovenky, Ilovaik and the city of Luhansk. The SMM was not able to register those supplies due to the restrictions imposed by Russia for the Mission's monitors and its technical assets. "Blinding" of the SMM remains one of the key objectives of the Russian occupation administration, which lacks support of the local population and thus is totally dependent on Russia's illegal supplies.

Civilians forced to stay under the Russian occupation continue to live in dire humanitarian conditions. Any day, they can be shelled while crossing the entry-exit checkpoint in Maiorsk, forced to stay overnight in a vehicle while waiting to cross the checkpoint near Kreminets or jeopardized by the militants in trenches "within 30m of a church with active childcare" in the occupied village of Dovhe. Those are facts established by the SMM even under the severe restrictions imposed by the Russian side. As reiterated many times before, it is Ukrainian citizens living in the conflict-affected areas who suffer the most from the ongoing Russian aggression. We take note of the SMM's reports that its "efforts to establish facts in response to reports of incidents – specifically to corroborate civilian casualties" continue to be impeded, as

the medical staff, terrified in the occupied cities and villages of Donbas, refuses to provide the Mission with any information without permission from senior members of the Russian armed formations.

The Government of Ukraine maintains its efforts to alleviate the sufferings of local population residing in the conflict-affected areas. Demining activities continue, including near Myrna Dolyna and Lebedynske, as reported by the SMM. Key objects of critical civilian infrastructure are restored, including the bridge near Popasna rebuilt recently by the Ukrainian military. Complete withdrawal of Russian armed formations, Russian weapons and Russian occupation administration from the territory of Ukraine remains a key to success if we wish civilians to get back to a normal life.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Last Thursday, the UN General Assembly Third Committee adopted at its 73<sup>rd</sup> session an updated draft resolution “Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine”. The resolution will be voted at the UN GA plenary session in a few weeks. We are grateful to the overwhelming majority of OSCE participating states – members of the UN (44 out of 56), which supported this draft resolution in the Third Committee. We deeply regret the position of those 7 countries, which voted against it together with the Russian Federation, an aggressor State and occupying Power in Crimea. In this connection we recall the OSCE commitment that “the participating States will not provide assistance to or support States that are in violation of their obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State”. This is the OSCE commitment made by all participating States. We hope that those countries will review their position before the vote on this resolution in the UN General Assembly plenary session. As emphasised by the MFA of Ukraine, the draft resolution pays special attention to Ukrainian citizens illegally detained by the Russian Federation on political grounds, and to further deterioration of the human rights situation in the occupied Crimea, including the facts of torture, arbitrary detentions and arrests, illegal transfer of Ukrainian detainees from the occupied Crimea to Russia, as well as the use of involuntary placement in psychiatric institutions. The facts highlighted in the draft resolution underline the urgency of unimpeded access of international human rights mechanisms, NGOs, as well as the OSCE SMM and OSCE executive structures to the occupied peninsula.

Close attention of the international community to the issue of Ukrainian citizens illegally detained by the Russian Federation on political grounds remains crucial in seeking their release by Kremlin. The SMM reported, in particular, about the recent ceremony in Kyiv with participation of senior Ukrainian officials and family members of Ukrainian political prisoners held captive by the Russian authorities in Russia as well as in Russia-occupied Crimean peninsula and parts of Donbas took part. We stand ready to finalize the process of exchange of detainees and release of political prisoners before the end of this year, as expressed during the recent meeting of President of Ukraine, President of France and Federal Chancellor of Germany in Paris.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The number of dire security and humanitarian challenges caused by the Russian aggression continues to grow. It demands firmness and effectiveness of international response, including at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Milan.

We again urge the Russian Federation to reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea and to stop its aggression against Ukraine, 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.**