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Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

**Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine
in response to the address by Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and
Environmental Activities Ambassador Vuk Žugić**

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1262nd meeting of the Permanent Council,
12 March 2020

Mr. Chairperson,

We warmly welcome Ambassador Žugić back to the Permanent Council and thank him for the comprehensive presentation of Co-ordinator's activities in the second dimension.

We appreciate that in 2020 the Coordinator will aim at reinforcing support to the participating States in implementing their commitments in the OSCE economic and environmental dimension, which we find certainly important for the advancement of our Organization's comprehensive approach to security.

Among Ukraine's priorities in the second dimension I would like to mention, in particular, addressing environmental implications of armed conflicts, ensuring good governance, combating corruption and money laundering, energy security and fostering the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by the participating States.

Therefore, we welcome the Coordinator's intention to focus activities on the areas of anti-corruption, digitalisation and environmental protection.

At the same time, we regret that we cannot identify in your presentation of the thematic focus on environmental issues in the conflict zones.

Dear Ambassador,

As you rightly underlined, since the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, protection of the environment has been the part of the OSCE agenda, further prioritized in the consecutive OSCE documents.

In this context it is important to note that the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension adopted at the Maastricht Ministerial Council meeting in 2003 stipulates, in particular, that “conflicts, in their turn, impede regional economic co-operation and development and undermine the security”.

Let me touch upon the acute environmental issues, which we believe, constitute a grave challenge not only for my country, but for the wider OSCE region as well.

The Russian invasion in Donbas has affected negatively natural resources and biodiversity through habitat destruction and fragmentation, increased pollution of land and water. Military actions in the vicinity of objects of infrastructure pose the threat of flooding the coal mines as an extremely dangerous contributing factor to ground waters and soil contamination, both chemical and radiological.

The imminent risks include the danger of destruction of liquid waste dams prone with inflicting irreversible damage to the region’s ecosystem and flooding vast populated areas. One of the gravest risks is posed by the shutdown of the pumps at the YunKom coal mine located in non-government controlled area of Donbas.

There is also need to address the issues of illegal exploitation of natural resources on the occupied territories by organized criminal groups.

The situation on the illegally occupied Crimean peninsula, where persistent damage to the environment is caused by toxic emissions of Titan plant, presents also a serious challenge.

To address such environmental challenges in Ukraine there is a clear need for setting up a comprehensive and effective system of ecological monitoring in the non-government controlled areas of Donbas in compliance with the OSCE concept of comprehensive security.

OSCE can assist in overcoming environmental impacts in crisis situations by monitoring and assessing them with a view to providing recommendations to the participating States on effective response to civilian health risks and potential long-term environmental damage, post-conflict environmental assessment and recovery.

We encourage the Co-ordinator to undertake activities in this field in close interaction with the SMM to Ukraine, and we call upon the OSCE through its SMM activities for monitoring the ecological situation in the occupied territories of Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.