



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

Statement on Russia's interference in elections in Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1221st meeting of the Permanent Council,
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Mr. Chairperson,

We wish to bring to the attention of the Permanent Council the large-scale interference of the Russian Federation in the elections of the President of Ukraine due to take place on 31 March 2019. Where Russia's military means failed in the past five years, the Kremlin regime attempts to achieve the objectives of its hybrid aggression against Ukraine also by different methods. These methods are not limited to manipulative political statements, like we heard today in the Council from the Russian delegation, but include such sinister forms as perpetration of terrorist activities on the Ukrainian territory, powerful cyber attacks, incitement of hatred and polarization in the society through social networks. We clearly discern the scenarios of the Russian authorities of instigating violence in Ukraine, including through different radical groups. They aim to destabilize Ukraine internally, to smear the democratic conduct of elections, to shed blood in the streets. The Ukrainian authorities and law enforcement will do the utmost to not let Moscow realize its hostile intentions.

As the delegation already informed today, last Friday the Security Service of Ukraine prevented a terrorist attack when the perpetrator was attempting to plant a bomb in a metro station in Kharkiv. As reported, he was hired and paid by his Russian curators, who also procured the explosive device with 600 grams of TNT. The nails and bolts for the bomb he bought himself with the aim of causing maximum injuries to innocent people.

The competent authorities of Ukraine are aware of Russia's intention to mount unprecedented cyber attacks on the election day of 31 March targeting, in particular, the servers of the Central Election Commission of Ukraine and of district election commissions to throw into question the legitimacy of the elections. Russian government-controlled hackers attempt to plant viruses in the computer systems that would get activated on the elections day and disrupt transfer of the electoral data in the online regime. At the same time, the Russian agents prepare for producing fake exit-polls and "parallel counts" to undermine confidence in the election results. It must not come as a surprise that two days ago in Moscow a parliamentary resolution was registered on "non-recognition of results of elections of the President of Ukraine", claiming "serious violations and mistakes in the work on the election commissions which led to the lack of necessary conditions for free expression of will" as well as "mass falsification" of the results. This document was formally registered on 26 March, few days prior the elections. Like before,

the Russian political regime is determined to undermine the free and democratic choice of the Ukrainian people, this time by flagrant interference in Ukraine's elections.

We bring it to the attention of the Permanent Council that in the first quarter of this year the Security Service of Ukraine documented 17 cases of interference of Russian special services in the electoral process in my country through intensive dissemination of disinformation and fakes. It has been established that Russian curators had guided over 50 groups in social networks with the outreach to over 1,5 mln users.

It is important for the OSCE community to be entirely mindful of continuing malign actions of the Russian authorities in connection with democratic processes in other countries, as for many of the Russian disruptive tactics Ukraine is used as a testing ground, but they are later also employed or fine-tuned for interference in elections in other states.

Mr. Chairperson,

Despite the challenges and tragic consequences of ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine, Russia's illegal occupation of parts of Ukraine's territory, continuous loss of life by Ukrainians under attacks of the Russian armed formations in Donbas, Ukraine and its leadership have approached the upcoming presidential elections with full dedication to ensure their free and democratic conduct in compliance with the national legislation and international standards.

Thirty-nine candidates are competing for the position of the President of Ukraine. The record number of the candidates and the varying priorities of their programmes testify to the political pluralism in the country.

Three days before the elections political experts point out to uncertainty about the winner or even the top two after the 31 March day of elections. This is part of the democratic environment that Ukraine has been consolidating over the past five years.

Ukraine displays full transparency for the international community enabling it to observe the full election process. On Monday, 25 March 2019, the Central Election Commission concluded the procedure of registration of international observers. In total, 2344 international observers were registered from 17 individual foreign states and 19 international organizations with participation of dozens of member states. These are record-setting numbers of international observers among all OSCE participating States! We are very glad to welcome all of them on the Ukrainian soil. At the same time, as we informed the Permanent Council, the Ukrainian authorities would not accredit for observation the nationals of the state determined in Ukraine's law as the aggressor-state and the occupant. This position was made very clear in the original letter of invitation sent by the Government of Ukraine to the OSCE ODIHR on 2 January 2019. This position is in full compliance with the provisions of paragraph 8 of the 1990 Copenhagen Document, whereby the monitors are invited to observe the course of national election proceedings to the extent permitted by law. Respective clarifications were made by the Delegation of Ukraine in the statement "On Russia's allegations concerning international electoral observation in Ukraine" delivered at the 1216th meeting of the Permanent Council on 7 February 2019. Reacting to unfounded claims of the Russian authorities, we would stress that, in Ukraine's view, even contemplation of an idea that representatives of an aggressor-state can monitor elections in a country, that is a victim of this continuing aggression with tens of thousands of killed and wounded, may not be permissible neither from political, legal or moral standpoints.

We would also add that an unprecedented number of national NGOs have been registered for monitoring the elections, thereby strengthening the confidence in the electoral process. We find important an active awareness-raising campaign throughout the country on the standards of democratic elections and prevention of fraud.

Ahead of the presidential elections in Ukraine in three days time, we reaffirm Ukraine's commitment to the conduct of free and fair elections in the country and determination to defend our democratic processes from interference of the aggressor-state.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.