



**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 1163<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
9 November 2017

**Mr. Chairperson,**

On 31 October, near non-government controlled Novoazovsk 40km east of Mariupol, the SMM “saw a man in dark green digital camouflage clothing with a shoulder patch bearing the image of a black bat on a blue background surrounded by a yellow ring.” A quick check-up of this description in the publically available sources would show how the emblem of the military intelligence of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation looks like. It is the same area adjacent to Ukraine’s border with Russia outside control of the Ukrainian government, where “the armed formations in parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions frequently deny the SMM access, citing orders to do so.” Whereas the Russian mercenaries and servicemen are consistent in this denial, it proves their unchanged intention to hide from the SMM monitoring.

For almost 45 months the Russian Federation remains in clear, gross and uncorrected violation of OSCE principles and commitments and continues its aggression against Ukraine. As reported by the SMM, the number of ceasefire violations in Donbas, including the Minsk-proscribed weapons, increased by 80 per cent and reached the highest numbers since the recommitment to ceasefire had been reached in the end of August. On 5 November, the Russian hybrid forces shelled Avdiivka and Opytne with almost 250 Grad missiles, 40 of which were outgoing from near the non-government-controlled Horlivka where the SMM patrol was present. The Ukrainian servicemen would respond only in the cases when their lives and the lives of civilians are put at risk.

On 3 November, the hybrid Russian forces fired at the Donetsk filtration station and damaged a reserve chlorine pipeline. The SMM camera at this location registers nearly daily multiple projectiles in flight from the east of the station where the hybrid Russian forces have their positions. In particular, “during the day on 6 November, the camera recorded 44 projectiles in flight from east to west 0.5-1.5km south”. We join Ambassador Martin Sajdik in condemning this and other shelling and

reminding of significant dangers of an ecological disaster affecting people on both sides of the line of contact. We urge the Russian Federation to put an end to its irresponsible behavior, stop shelling the critical civilian infrastructure and provide security guarantees for the conduct of necessary repair works.

The residential areas continue to be deliberately jeopardized by the hybrid Russian forces. On 5 November, for instance, the SMM reported about a checkpoint in non-government-controlled Pryshyb located only 8m from a residential house. The civilians living in the areas of Donbas, effectively controlled by Russia, do not only endure enormous hardships, but are deprived of the possibility to express their concerns. As underlined by the SMM, “freedom of assembly appears denied – or discouraged – by those in control in non-government-controlled areas.” The local population is threatened and intimidated by the hybrid Russian forces to prevent contacts extending beyond the bubble of Russian propaganda. Notable in this regard is the SMM’s daily report of 3 November that the interlocutor in non-government-controlled Novosvitlivka 16km south-east of Luhansk “refused to speak to the SMM without written permission” from the illegal structures in Luhansk city.

The three boys in Donetsk, one killed and two wounded on 5 November, increased the toll of young victims of the war that Russia brought to the Ukrainian soil. We appreciate the efforts of the SMM to provide objective information on the incident which was after it happened immediately seized by the Russian propaganda machine, both in Donetsk and Moscow, for the purpose of circulating fakes. We expect receipt of information from the SMM about detonation at an ammunition storage of the hybrid Russian forces on the same day that caused damage, in particular in the Kyivsky district of Donetsk, reported by the mission.

### **Distinguished colleagues,**

The SMM patrols continue to face deliberate denials of access exclusively in areas of Donbas under effective Russia’s control: the SMM weekly report of 1 November pointed out that all nine “non-mine-related restrictions imposed on the SMM were in non-government-controlled areas”. As before, Russia and its proxies do not lift these restrictions, bringing their total number in four weeks to 36.

The incidents of intimidation of the SMM patrols in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions remain without any meaningful reaction from the Russian side. Russia’s proxies in Donbas do not only continue to threaten monitors, as was the case of a loaded heavy machine-gun pointed at the SMM patrol near Verkhnohyrokiivske on 25 October; they deny their responsibility and even the fact of the threat itself, as highlighted in the SMM weekly report of 1 November.

Emboldened by impunity, the hybrid Russian forces continue to attack or interfere with the SMM’s assets, as again was the case on 5 November, when “the SMM experienced technical difficulties with its VHF radio system, assessed as possibly due to jamming” while patrolling near the same Verkhnohyrokiivske, mentioned above. Earlier the SMM reported about advanced military jamming equipment brought by Russians into the occupied areas.

Whereas the Russian side evades responsibility and continues to offer its flawed narrative on restrictions for the SMM from the Ukrainian Armed Forces and mines near the contact line, the SMM reports may serve to expose the deceit. In particular, the SMM reported on 2 November that the “armed persons” in non-government-controlled Novolaspa 50km south of Donetsk “denied the SMM access to two streets, stating that there were mines present. The SMM noted that the streets were paved and that civilians were walking and driving on the street.”

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The delegation of Ukraine has consistently drawn attention of the Permanent Council to a direct correlation between the on-going restrictions on the SMM’s freedom of movement, imposed by the hybrid Russian forces, and the brutal violations by the Russian side of the Minsk agreements, including with respect to a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire, withdrawal of heavy weapons and permanent OSCE monitoring at the Ukrainian-Russian state border. The SMM weekly report of 1 November is very telling in this regard, as it informs about refusal of Russia and its proxies in Donetsk to provide security guarantees for maintenance work to restore the functionality of a camera in the area, where the SMM registered the use of MLRS and other artillery. The SMM underlines that the repeated targeting of UAVs by the illegal armed forces in non-government-controlled Trudivski area of Donetsk city demonstrates the determination “to blind the SMM’s observations in Trudivski”, where the use of UAVs “is a means to circumvent physical restrictions placed on SMM movement”. The Russian delegation may wish to explain why the hybrid Russian forces are so keen to disable SMM’s monitoring in this area, in which, although, the Russian JCCC officers are quick to appear and invite the SMM to allege violation of cease-fire by Ukrainian servicemen, but again with restrictions to SMM’s freedom of movement.

The same SMM weekly report underscores that “monitoring efforts in southern parts of Donetsk region continued to be impeded by the refusal” of Russia’s proxies in Donetsk to provide security guarantees for maintenance of the SMM camera in Shyrokyne and for installation of acoustic sensors on it. “On the one night of the week that the camera was functional” it recorded “over three times more projectiles fired from the direction” of non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk “than from government-controlled areas”. Unfortunately, as from the very beginning of the Russian aggression, the Russian Federation continues to aim at creating illusions and deceiving the international community, instead of implementing in good faith the undertaken commitments on peaceful resolution of the conflict it started.

Russia bears responsibility not only for the conflict it started but also severe restrictions on the work of the SMM. We must remember how in April, when working on the text of the PC Declaration of support of the SMM, the Russian Federation, a single participating State, objected inclusion in the text of condemnation of attempts to harass or intimidate SMM monitors or to prevent them from carrying out their duties. Russia also objected inclusion of the demand for SMM’s access without reservations, hindrance or delay.

**Distinguished colleagues,**

Earlier we informed about the disappearance of 19-year old Ukrainian citizen Pavlo Hryb abducted by the Russian secret services from the territory of Belarus to Russia. Pavlo Hryb is still in illegal detention, along with dozens of other Ukrainian political prisoners in Russia. Last Tuesday, on 7 November, the Krasnodar regional court in Russia refused house arrest and supported the extension of the illegal detention of Pavlo Hryb until 4 January 2018. In violation of the norms of international law and the relevant decision of the ECHR, the Russian side continues denying medical assistance to him, inflicting a deliberate harm to his health. The cruelty of such treatment and Russia's disrespect for the ECHR's decision require strengthened political and diplomatic pressure on the Russian Federation to stop the heinous practice of abducting and torturing Ukrainian citizens and to seek immediate release of those thrown behind bars in Russia under fabricated charges. Russia must also stop the political repressions in the illegally occupied Crimean peninsula, where again yesterday Crimean Tatars were searched and detained in the towns of Bakhchisaray, Stary Krym and settlements of Zarichne and Kirovske.

We again urge the Russian Federation to return to the tenets of international law, to stop its aggression against Ukraine, including by withdrawing its troops from the Ukrainian territory, and to reverse the illegal occupation of Crimea and Sevastopol.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**