



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 1190th meeting of the Permanent Council,
21 June 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

As we approach the next week’s OSCE Annual Security Review Conference, we note with deep concern that the security situation in the conflict-affected areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine remains violent, tense and unpredictable. We continue to encounter the situation in the middle of Europe, where one OSCE participating State maintains an armed intervention in a neighbouring state and illegally occupies a part of the territory of the neighbour, and where the very same participating State maintains its total denial of any involvement into this brutal violation of international law and the OSCE principles and commitments. Russia’s aggression against Ukraine does not stop: in its weekly report of 12 June, the SMM recorded a 70 per cent increase in the number of ceasefire violations in Donbas, compared with the previous reporting period.

As repeatedly witnessed in the past, such sharp increase of violence correlates with the growing number of Russian heavy weapons registered by the SMM in violation of withdrawal lines: 115 in the weekly report of 12 June, ten times more than in the previous week (14), including “tanks parked between civilian houses”. 360 pieces of Russian heavy weapons were observed by the SMM outside designated storage sites in the Russia-occupied territories of Donbas, compared with zero spotted in the previous week. Let me emphasise these findings: almost five hundred pieces of MLRS, tanks, howitzers and other lethal weapons have been concentrated by the Russian armed formations close to the contact line and to the withdrawal line in one week. These findings are an indication of the level of military threat posed by the Russian invasion force, as the real numbers of all Russian weaponry in Donbas are far bigger.

Large-scale movement of heavy weapons, reported by the SMM, has been accompanied by establishment of new military positions revealed by the Mission near Russia-occupied localities of Oleksandrivske, Novohryhorivka, and Rozsadyk. On 13 June the Russian armed formations were spotted by the SMM inside the disengagement area near Petrivske while “loading or unloading ammunition, small

arms and a small recoilless gun (SPG type) on a tripod” together with armored combat and infantry fighting vehicles. Near the Donetsk Filtration Station the Russian fighters continue reinforcing their military positions: on 14 June, positioned about 2km east of the DFS, the SMM observed “about 40 people fortifying a trench and probable bunker”, as well as “trucks carrying at least 12 loads of dirt to the site”. On 17 June, “the SMM observed a bulldozer driven by a man in military-style clothing altering positions of the armed formations approximately 1.5km east-south-east of the DFS”. This situation on the ground is very much different from declaratory calls of the Russian delegation on “disengagement of forces” near the DFS. Instead of fulfilling its commitments by withdrawing the armed formations behind the contact line established under the Minsk agreements, the Russian side keeps moving its positions and calling at the same time on Ukraine to withdraw its armed forces.

The SMM continues to register in Russia-occupied areas of Donbas the modern advanced Russian weapons, which have never been in use of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Last Saturday, located near the above mentioned disengagement area of Petrivske, “the SMM observed four men in military-type uniform, one carrying an anti-tank guided missile (9M133 Kornet, 152mm) which he dropped into tall grass after becoming aware of the SMM’s presence”. “Kornet” is a third-generation anti-tank guided missile produced in Russia. It does not surprise that the Russian fighter wanted to hide it from the SMM monitors who continue to report facts on the Russian military presence in Donbas. These are the facts that consistently and convincingly contradict Russia’s denials of its role as a party to the conflict. We note that at the last Permanent Council the Russian delegation left unanswered the questions about other modern Russian weapons and military equipment, registered by the SMM in Donbas, including the recent spotting of a TORN radio intelligence system. We expect answers from the Russian delegation.

Distinguished colleagues,

Continuing evasion by the Russian side of its responsibilities remains the main source of serious security and humanitarian challenges, including for the OSCE SMM’s mandated activities in the conflict-affected area. While the Russian minister verbally subscribed to the position of the other three ministers at the last Normandy Four ministerial meeting on the need of unhampered access for the SMM mission, following the meeting the fighters of the Russian armed formations continued to put at risk the unarmed civilian monitors and attack the OSCE assets. In Russia-occupied Pikuzy, where the monitors had been impeded and denied access on many occasions in the past, an SMM patrol consisting of six members and two armoured vehicles was fired at on 14 June to warn them, as assessed by the monitors, and force to leave the area where they were trying to register fresh tracks of an infantry fighting vehicle. The next morning after we condemned in the last week’s Permanent Council the incident when the Russian armed formations near Ukrainiske fired two missiles at an SMM LR UAV, the Russian fighters have again attempted to shoot down a LR UAV from two surface-to-air missile systems near Betmanove and Panteleimonivka. As underlined by the SMM, “the UAV transponder had been tested prior to the flight and was functional at the time of the incident”, and the notice on the flight was provided per established procedure. It is clear that the shooting at the UAV was a deliberate act

by the Russian armed formations to disable the OSCE asset and hide proscribed weapons from the SMM's monitoring. We strongly condemn these attacks, as we condemned numerous previous attacks, and urge Russia to stop them immediately.

Distinguished colleagues,

The fate of the Ukrainian citizens, taken hostage by Kremlin as political prisoners, has been in the focus of the Permanent Council from the very beginning of Russia's invasion into Ukraine. We have long witnessed the total lack of political will of the Russian side to see this issue resolved. Despite the recent impetus, provided by the phone call between the presidents of Ukraine and the Russian Federation as well as the discussion in the Normandy Four ministerial meeting, the Ukrainian Ombudsperson L.Denisova was not able to see a single Ukrainian citizen on the list since her arrival to Russia last Thursday. Discussions with the Russian Ombudsperson have not yet translated into a possibility of real meetings, and thus, unfortunately, resemble a delaying tactics on the Russian side at the time when there are grave concerns about health condition of the Ukrainians in question, in particular Oleg Sentsov. We use this opportunity to again strongly urge the Russian authorities to release without delays and conditions the Ukrainian citizens, who were illegally detained or imprisoned on fabricated and politically motivated charges, among them Oleg Sentsov, Oleksandr Kolchenko, Stanyslav Klykh, Roman Sushchenko, Volodymyr Balukh and many others.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the illegally occupied Crimean peninsula the Russian occupation regime continues denial of access of international human rights and non-governmental organizations, as well as of the OSCE, its institutions and field missions – the SMM and PCU.

Under these circumstances the civil society remains in fact the only source of information on the persistence of grave human rights violations committed by the occupying Power. In this context, we welcome the recent expert meeting in Kherson with the OSCE participation which reviewed, in particular, the challenges faced by human rights defenders working on and in Crimea. We expect the OSCE executive structures to closely follow and react within their mandates to the developments in Ukraine's territories which are now under illegal occupation of the Russian Federation.

We strongly welcome that on 18 June, the Council of the EU extended for the next 12-month period the "Crimean" restrictive measures against Russia. Aggression and illegal occupation of a part of the territory of a sovereign state must bear increasing costs for the aggressor. Only consolidated and consistent position of the international community can make Moscow return to the tenets of international law.

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