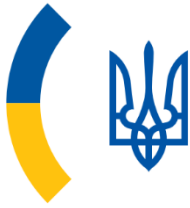


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Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

**Statement in response to Ambassador Gyorgy Varga,
Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission
at two Russian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border**

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1259th meeting of the Permanent Council,
13 February 2020

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of Ukraine warmly welcomes Mr. György Varga, the Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border, back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his well-prepared report and today's presentation.

We will soon enter the seventh year of the conflict, initiated by Russia's armed aggression against my country. The issue of the border between Ukraine and Russia and increasing transparency at it continues to be critical for peaceful resolution of the conflict. Ensuring independent international monitoring at the border was the reason why participating States took the decision to deploy the Border Observer Mission in July 2014. Two month later, this goal became a part of Minsk Protocol, co-signed by Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE as mediator. This goal remains relevant until now.

Although with limited mandate, small size and significant restrictions, the Mission continues to provide useful information exposing Russia's support for its armed formations in Donbas. During the reporting period, 341 crossings of people in military-style outfits from Russia into Ukraine and back were observed. Twenty-nine ambulances and eight funeral service vehicles crossed the border in both directions, including a vehicle with Russian license plates bearing the sign "Gruz-200", that is "Cargo-200", a well-known military code for transporting "military personnel killed in action". Twelve so-called "humanitarian convoys", a sharp increase from previous periods, were sent by Russia in violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

I would remind that these data were gathered from only two border crossing points out of 409 km of the Ukrainian-Russian state border segment, which is for now controlled on both sides by the Russian authorities. That is the reason why the Russian Federation, one country among 57, has been objecting since 2014 to the expansion of the geographic scope of the Mission.

Combined with the facts established by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine on the temporarily occupied parts of Donbas, findings of the BOM testify to a military intervention of the Russian Federation into sovereign territory of Ukraine. We welcome good working relations maintained between the two OSCE field missions and encourage to continue them. They are our eyes and ears on the ground.

We appreciate that Chief Monitor does not shy away from providing a comprehensive list of impediments to the Mission's activities, imposed by the Russian authorities. The most significant of them include restrictions on the freedom of movement within the BCPs, non-allowance for use of any observation tools, including binoculars, technical surveillance equipment and UAVs, as well as so-called "recommendations" of the host country for the border observers not to initiate conversations with by-passers. We strongly condemn these restrictions by host country and urge the Russian Federation to lift them.

In conclusion, we once again thank Ambassador György Varga and his able team for their dedicated work aimed at enhancing transparency at the Ukrainian-Russian state border.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.