



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 1179th meeting of the Permanent Council,
15 March 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of Ukraine notes with regret that the situation in the conflict zone in Donbas has not essentially changed. Although the SMM recorded fewer ceasefire violations and fewer instances of the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons compared with the previous reporting period, the recommitment to a comprehensive, sustainable and unlimited ceasefire agreed within the TCG is still pending compliance. SMM daily reports register dozens of ceasefire violations, including explosions taking place in a number of hotspots along the contact line. Ukrainian servicemen continue to suffer casualties: during one week before recommitment to ceasefire 1 servicemen was killed and 6 were wounded, in one week after the announced unlimited ceasefire, from 5 to 11 March, 4 servicemen were killed and 7 wounded. Civilians continue to be targeted by fire of the Russian armed formations as was the case with shooting at the truck of “Voda Donbasa” water company on 7 March. The vehicle of this company was again shot at on 13 March as it drove to change staff shifts at the Donetsk water filtration station. Russian weapons target essential civilian infrastructure, as was the case with “three fresh craters in a field about 50m east of a natural gas distribution warehouse in Pidlisne” spotted by the SMM in its weekly report of 6 March.

Tanks, towed howitzers and military-type armoured vehicles of the Russian armed formations are registered in dozens by the SMM in Myrne, near Miusynsk and other locations.

Distinguished colleagues,

What we witness is that again the announced recommitment to ceasefire is not only breached, but also used by the Russian armed formations for resupply and restocking with weapons and ammunition and reinforcement of their military positions on the sovereign territory of Ukraine. On 7 March, the SMM observed fresh tracks of heavy trucks in both directions on a road leading towards the border with the Russian Federation just south of Russia-occupied Kuznetsy 1km from the border.

The SMM underscored that “there is no international border crossing point on this road”, which proves the presence of illegal traffic across the international border at the entire segment of over 400 km, controlled only by the Russian authorities and Russian occupation administration in Donbas. The Ukrainian competent authorities registered and documented, in particular, the arrival from Russia to Ilovaisk of 5 railway carriages with ammunition on 2 March, whereas on 4 March a railway echelon comprising 11 cisterns of fuel and lubricants (660 tons) and eight platforms with armoured vehicles and moving from Russia towards Debeltseve.

The SMM aerial imagery revealed newly dug trenches in Russia-occupied areas near Zaitseve, Horlivka, Dokuchaievsk, Sakhanka and Bezimenne, and tank scrapes near Rozdolne that were not seen in earlier imagery. The SMM also observed “additional weapons present for the first time” in the Russia-occupied areas of Donetsk region of Ukraine.

The Russian military presence continues to persist in the residential areas of Donbas and in a zone in non-government-controlled areas of southern Donetsk region within which deployment of heavy armaments and military equipment is proscribed according to Point 5 of the Minsk Memorandum.

Distinguished colleagues,

Effective monitoring and verification of the ceasefire regime, the withdrawal of heavy weapons and disengagement of forces is to be ensured by the OSCE SMM, as envisaged by the Minsk agreements and the TCG framework decision relating to disengagement of forces and hardware. However, the same SMM continues to encounter significant freedom of movement restrictions and other impediments in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas: the weekly report of 6 March informs about 15 non-mine related restrictions, all in areas outside of Ukrainian government control. The SMM noted “the recurring restrictions in Luhansk region at border areas near the Russian Federation”, where the Mission’s patrols have been regularly denied access by armed militants “who routinely ask the SMM the purpose of the visit and record the SMM patrol member’s identification documents and the Mission vehicle’ licence plates”. We wish to ask the Russian delegation for explanations about, I quote from the SMM report, “instructions prohibiting the SMM’s presence in the border area”, which have been issued by the Russian occupation administration in Luhansk. We call upon the Russian Federation to lift any restrictions to the SMM activities and take measures to ensure that the SMM can fully and safely perform its mandate and functions in Russia-occupied part of Donbas.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the illegally occupied Crimea the Russian Federation not only continues to pursue policies of repression and silencing of dissenting voices, but also maintains the “information bubbles” by blocking the Ukrainian mass media, including online resources, and imposing instead the Russian propaganda to brainwash the Crimean population. According to estimates of the Crimean Human Rights Group, 30 Ukrainian web-sites have been completely or partially blocked on the territory of Crimea.

The residents of Crimea continue to be exposed to high risks of becoming victims of murder, torture, harassment, illegal detention, enforced disappearance, intimidation, attacks on property and arrests under fabricated charges. Detained Crimean Tatars are deprived of their rights as was the case on 8 March when Abdulla Ibrahimov has been stopped at the Armyansk checkpoint at the administrative border between the Kherson region and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and beaten for several hours by the officials of the Federal Security Service of Russia. Late at night he was released without any explanations from the Russian occupation authorities. This incident underlines the absence of protection of the rights of the Ukrainian citizens forced to live under the temporary Russian occupation and again proves the reasons why the Russian authorities deny access of international human rights organizations and monitoring mechanisms. We strongly urge the Russian Federation, as an occupying power, to immediately put an end to gross human rights violations in temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

We also reiterate Ukraine`s protest over the visit yesterday of the Russian delegation headed by President V.Putin to the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol without consent of the Ukrainian authorities.

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. We urge the Russian Federation to restore respect to its obligations under international law, to the OSCE principles and commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.