



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

Statement on “Immediate threatening development taking place in Avdiivka in Donbas”

As for delivery by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1131th special meeting of the Permanent Council,
31 January 2017

Mr. Chairman,

The Delegation of Ukraine wishes to thank the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship for a swift positive response to our request for convening this Special Permanent Council meeting today. This request has been prompted by rapid aggravation of the situation in and near Avdiivka in Donetsk oblast as a result of a sustained assault by the hybrid Russian forces in Donbas.

Since early hours of Sunday, 29 January, the hybrid Russian forces have conducted massive artillery attacks on Avdiivka and its suburbs directly from Donetsk and Yasynuvata residential areas and sent assault units to seize control of the positions of the Ukrainian Armed Forces near Avdiivka. The shellings have been conducted with the use of MLRS "Grad", tanks, 152mm and 122mm artillery, 120mm and 82mm mortars.

On 29 January the Ukrainian positions were shelled nearly four hundred times, while on 30 January this number doubled. The information on high intensity of explosions was reflected in the SMM report of 30 January and registered by the monitors positioned in Yasynuvata and Donetsk under control of the hybrid Russian forces.

As indicated in my letter, circulated to all delegations this morning, the Ukrainian military undertook numerous efforts through the JCCC to establish cease-fire regime, but the requests were ignored. On 30 January alone the Ukrainian side placed requests for cease-fire 136 times.

During last night, from 30 to 31 January, MLRS "Grad" systems, positioned in residential areas of the Donetsk city, were used to shell Avdiivka. Over 80 Grad missiles were fired. The hybrid Russian forces regularly resort to the cynical practice of resorting to shellings under protection of civilian buildings. We strongly condemn these terrorist tactics. This morning the shells landed close to a hospital and residential buildings in Avdiivka.

Today in the morning the illegal armed formations requested a cease-fire regime, which was widely reported by Russian propaganda media outlets, and immediately after regrouping launched a new attack on the Ukrainian Armed Forces positions.

This and previous attacks were repelled by the defences and a tactical counter-attack of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, making the units of the hybrid Russian forces retreat. However, their failure to seize the Ukrainian positions and entailing losses have not stopped the hybrid Russian forces from continuing the assault.

On two days of 29 and 30 January, 8 Ukrainian servicemen were killed and 26 were wounded. There are casualties and wounded persons among civilians.

Mr. Chairman,

In the evening of 30 January the Russian hybrid forces damaged the last functioning electric power line cutting off Avdiivka coke plant and leaving the town of Avdiivka without heat, electric power and water supply. Donetsk filter station stopped functioning.

Taking into account current weather conditions in Donbas, where the temperature fell last night to minus 20 degrees Celsius, the Ukrainian authorities have announced the emergency situation in Avdiivka which now has the population of over 16000 people, among them over 2000 are children. Due to a timely response, we have managed to sustain the functioning of the heating system at a minimum level and to avoid a quick degradation of the situation into a humanitarian disaster.

The Ukrainian authorities make every effort to ensure life-sustaining activity and help people in a freezing town: 11 warming centres were set up, scores of field kitchens were deployed, kindergardens and hospitals function in the emergency mode. Additional police units were sent to protect civil order and help in timely response to the emergency.

80 buses and 2 trains were prepared and made ready to evacuate up to 12 thousand people from Avdiivka to other towns in the vicinity. Voluntary evacuation has already been offered, primarily to people with disabilities and children.

The Ukrainian authorities stand ready to send immediately, as soon as ceasefire is guaranteed, the repair teams to repair electric power line to Avdiivka and allow resumption of daily living activities of the population. Unfortunately, the Russian officers in the JCCC would not come to terms with the Russian officers in Donetsk on stopping the shellings and extending the security guarantees for repair works. The current update from the ground is that today the repairs would not be possible as until now security guarantees have not been confirmed by the Russian part of the JCCC.

Distinguished colleagues,

The attacks on and near Avdiivka in the last two days again showed contempt of the hybrid Russian forces for the population of the region and represented deliberate acts of military escalation on the eve of the planned meeting of Trilateral Contact Group. Russia and its proxies in Donbas continue to undermine the peaceful process, based on full and good-faith implementation of the Minsk agreements, by pursuing their political objectives through the usual blackmail of the indiscriminate use of force.

We once again urge the Russian Federation to exercise its responsibility in honouring the undertaken Minsk commitments, specifically their security provisions. We urge the Russian side to immediately halt its offensive actions and shellings in Avdiivka and in Donbas as a whole. Today the Ukrainian Foreign Minister and his Danish counterpart were not able to visit Shyrokyne near Mariupol because of continuous shellings by the hybrid Russian forces.

Sustainable cease-fire regime and security are desperately needed to meet the immediate needs of the civilian population.

The humanitarian emergency caused by deadly shellings of Avdiivka reinforces the high pertinence of Ukraine's demands to Russia to respect the cease-fire, to stop military supplies to its hybrid forces in Donbas and withdraw them from Ukraine's territory. We underscore the importance of thorough verification by the SMM in the occupied areas without restrictions to the freedom of movement as well as of establishment of permanent monitoring and verification by the OSCE at the uncontrolled sections of the Ukrainian-Russian state border.

We call on the OSCE participating States to step up political and diplomatic pressure in seeking Russia's full implementation of undertaken Minsk commitments which it continuously and flagrantly violates.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.