



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
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Statement on “Russia’s on-going aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea”

As for delivery by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1146th meeting of the Permanent Council,
18 May 2017

Mr. Chairman,

At the Permanent Council last week the SMM Chief Monitor Ambassador E. Apakan underscored the need of establishment of sustainable cease-fire as an urgent and basic requirement for progress on peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. The SMM continues registering in their daily and weekly reports the numerous ceasefire violations, use of heavy weapons and MLRS, as well as laying of new mine fields by the Russia-backed illegal armed formations in Donbas. The SMM cameras record rounds in flight from the occupied areas of Donbas targeting the positions of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in Shyrokyne, Avdiivka, Stanytsia Luhanska and other locations.

The shellings by the hybrid Russian forces continue to target the residential areas along the contact line in Donbas. On 14 May, as confirmed by the SMM, an artillery (122mm) round fired from non-government areas targeted a residential house in Avdiivka killing four civilian and leaving one seriously wounded. Two little girls, of 6 and 7 years old, are now orphans.

This is yet another tragic example of a terrible human cost of the ongoing Russia’s armed aggression against Ukraine, when Ukrainian citizens are killed and wounded daily by Russian weapons, ammunition, fighters and troops sent into the Ukrainian territory through the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. In the report of 15 May the SMM registered the Russian UAV Orlan-10, which are used by the Russian military for reconnaissance and targeting the fire. Until Russia stops obstructing the establishment of permanent OSCE monitoring and verification at the uncontrolled segment of the border, including through significant expansion of the mandate of the Observer Mission on the Russian side, Moscow’s declarations on resolving the conflict by peaceful means will remain little more, than a diplomatic cover.

In these conditions it is critically important to maintain international pressure to make the Russian Federation stop shellings by its hybrid forces, observe a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire, withdraw its forces. These are the initial steps of the Minsk agreements signed by Russia. Russia must not be allowed to

abscond its responsibility for implementing in full the undertaken commitments, as such attempts were again reflected in a comment on 11 May by the Kremlin's spokesperson, alleging that "Russia was not a party to the Minsk agreements, but a guarantor state, alongside France and Germany". We remind the Russian delegation that Russia signed each of the documents agreed in Minsk, starting with the Minsk Protocol of 5 September 2014.

Distinguished colleagues,

This unwillingness of the Russian side to responsibly fulfill its Minsk commitments, alongside with its recent further steps to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, emboldens the illegal armed formations in Donbas, which enjoy Russia's endorsement and complete impunity for their actions.

As underlined by the SMM Chief Monitor in his report to the Permanent Council last week, the impunity of individuals responsible for attacks against the SMM led to an even greater willingness to threaten the lives of SMM monitors on the ground, whereas violent impediments had taken place against a backdrop of numerous misleading statements of Minsk signatories from areas not controlled by the Government, particularly in the wake of the 23 April explosion and SMM fatality.

Impunity is the reason why the Russian hybrid fighters in the Donetsk region demanded twice, as stated in the SMM reports of 13 and 16 May, the names and gender of the SMM patrol members in the same Petrivske, where only several days before an incident of a sexual harassment of a SMM female patrol member took place. No individual was identified after the incident of 5 May, no one was taken to account, and therefore there is no restraint to repeating the intimidation of an SMM patrol member. Moreover, such behaviour was effectively endorsed by the Russian side during the TCG meeting on 15 May.

It is the same impunity which emboldens a militant from Donetsk to fire a small-arms shot 20m from the SMM patrol in non-government controlled Verkhnohyrokiyske 29km north-east of Mariupol to hasten the patrol's departure from the area, as reported by the SMM on 17 May.

It is this impunity which emboldens the Russian hybrid fighters in Dokuchaievsk to throw a smoke grenade at a moving SMM patrol vehicle, as reported by the SMM yesterday.

We utterly condemn this attitude. We underscore the special responsibility of the Russian Federation, as a party to the conflict and a party to the Minsk agreements, to put an end to these threats, harassment and intimidation. The civilian monitors of the SMM must be able to fulfill their work in safety and security, as provided by the Mission's mandate. Implementation of the Minsk agreements envisages an active monitoring and verification role of the SMM, which must have the necessary conditions for performing its functions.

The SMM reports state the predominant majority of both restrictions of the Mission's freedom of movement and weapons in violation of the respective withdrawal lines in the areas of Donbas which are under effective control of the Russian Federation. The SMM weekly report of 10 May is illustrative in that respect. The link between the restrictions faced by the Mission in its freedom of movement

and the weapons believed to be present in areas where the monitors are denied access has been repeatedly underlined by the SMM.

Although the hybrid Russian forces "have declared, and placed in holding sites, far fewer weapons than has the Ukrainian Armed Forces" (from SMM reports), only one SMM report of 15 May informs of four cases when the illegal armed formations denied the SMM access to a compound near Makiivka, two heavy weapon holding areas and one permanent storage site, not including a number of checkpoints in the occupied areas.

It is the evasion by Russia of its responsibility when Russian officers in the JCCC hand over to the SMM an instruction issued to "those staffing checkpoints in parts of Donetsk region outside government control" to "stop SMM patrols; to deny the SMM passage unless they are on "planned routes"; and to avoid any discussion with the SMM and to any enquiry from the SMM", as stated in the SMM report of 13 May.

We underscore that the Declaration of support for the SMM, approved by all OSCE participating States on 27 April, including by Russia, reaffirms that the SMM is mandated to have safe and secure access throughout Ukraine and calls for this to be fully respected. We urge the Russian side to observe the letter and spirit of this Declaration and to ensure that the hybrid Russian forces in Donbas remove all impediments that stand in the way of fulfillment by the Mission of its mandate.

Mr. Chairman,

Following up on the TCG meeting of 15 May, we look forward to speedier results on release of hostages and illegally detained persons, based on the large-scale work conducted together with the OSCE representatives within the verification process since 28 April. The process was conducted in full accordance with international standards, confidentiality principle and norms of international humanitarian law. Hundreds of individuals refused to return to the occupied areas of Donbas after release. We call upon Russia not to make any further delays to the release.

We also urge Russia to release the Ukrainian citizens, illegally detained on trumped-up charges in the Russian territory and in the temporarily occupied Crimea. On 12 May, one year has passed since the Deputy Chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, Ilmi Umerov, was arrested under the pretext of "extremism". This eminent representative of the Crimean Tatar people was subjected to detention in a psychiatric facility and a forced psychiatric examination, encountered threats and intimidations aiming to break his will. As part of repressive policies to silence dissenting voices, the Russian occupation authorities carried out over 800 searches of Crimean Tatars and their homes since the beginning of the illegal occupation of Crimea.

We urge the Russian Federation to fulfill its international commitments and obligations, in particular as a party to the Minsk agreements and as an occupying power in Crimean peninsula, to stop the aggression and to reverse the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula, which remains an integral part of Ukraine.

Mr. Chairman,

Before concluding, I would like to inform the Permanent Council with satisfaction and delight that yesterday was a day of historic significance for Ukraine as documents on Ukraine-EU visa liberalization were signed in Strasbourg by the President of the European Parliament in the presence of the President of Ukraine. This accomplishment was preceded by tenuous work of Ukrainian governmental authorities to meet 144 technical criteria for liberalization. The President and the Government are resolved to continue comprehensive reforms in the country. It is a landmark juncture on the path of realizing the European aspirations of the Ukrainian nation. Over three years ago, during the Revolution of Dignity, the people of Ukraine went out into the streets to peacefully defend their rights and freedoms and the future of Ukraine as a European democracy. Ukrainians were brutally punished and continue to be punished for the choice of freedom and democracy by Kremlin which self-assumed the right to decide the destiny of other nations. Ukrainians stand firm in vigorously defending their country and the common European values of democracy and the rule of law. In this time of unprecedented challenges, we highly appreciate and continue to rely on strong solidarity of the democratic civilized world to stop, jointly with Ukraine, the ongoing Russian aggression.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.