



**Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine
at the 800-th FSC Plenary Meeting**

(21 October 2015 at 10.00, Hofburg)

(Agenda item 2)

Mr. Chairman,

Ukraine continues to implement fully and in good faith its commitments under the Minsk agreements, in particular on withdrawal of weapons under the Addendum to the Minsk Package of measures of 29 September 2015. In line with the agreed arrangements, **on 16 October Ukrainian forces have completed the withdrawal** of the tanks, artillery below 100 mm calibre and mortars below 120 mm calibre in Luhansk region, being subject to the OSCE SMM verification. The SMM was able to verify the results of the first stage on the withdrawal of the agreed weapons by the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

In line with this Addendum, **on 20 October Ukraine has started the second stage on withdrawal** of the smaller calibre weapons in Donetsk region. The OSCE SMM was provided with information on types of weapons to be withdrawn, routes and storage sites.

Against the background of Ukraine's commitment to withdrawal, we note with great concern the large presence of heavy weapons in militant-controlled areas of Donbas in violation of withdrawal lines, as reported by the SMM. From their current positions, these weapons can inflict grave damage and trigger an escalation of the conflict. Evidence gathered by the SMM shows that, once again, combined Russian-militant forces continue to be in breach of their commitments under the Minsk agreements.

It is therefore of critical importance for the peace process that the withdrawal of smaller caliber weapons is accompanied without any delay by the full and unconditional withdrawal by pro-Russian militants of all heavy weapons in accordance with the Minsk Package of Measures, which will have to be verified by the SMM. This is essential for the sustainability of the ceasefire and to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.

We are also concerned by SMM reports that pro-Russian militants have removed heavy weapons from designated storage areas. Weapons must be returned to their holding areas without delay and to be subject of SMM verification.

Mr. Chairman,

The September 1 ceasefire continues to largely hold in much of eastern Ukraine. At the same time, we are deeply concerned about the recent shelling incidents, resulting in further casualties among Ukrainian military, as reported by the SMM. This underlines that the situation on the ground remains fragile and volatile.

The recent attacks by pro-Russian militants on Ukrainian positions, which injured four soldiers near Troistke on October 8, killed one and wounded two others near Avdiyivka on October 14, left two soldiers wounded near Pisky and Shyrokinе on

October 17, underscore the importance of complete compliance with weapons withdrawal arrangements and making every effort to uphold the ceasefire.

For its part, Ukraine consistently respected the ceasefire and continues to move ahead with the withdrawal, despite violent provocations of combined Russian-separatist forces. We call on Russia to prevent future attacks. This is the only way to sustainable truce on the ground.

Mr. Chairman,

We continue to urge the Russian Federation to speed up the release of all hostages and illegally detained persons on the basis of “all-for-all” principle. Last week the pro-Russian militants again failed to honor the undertaken commitments on the regular exchange of captives by “10 to 5” formula, scheduled for 16 October.

A few weeks ago the Ukrainian competent authorities started to discuss details of the exchange and were ready to transfer to the other side 10 people from the so-called “DPR” and “LPR”. Unfortunately, the negotiations were disrupted by the pro-Russian militants under guidance from Moscow.

According to the Security Service of Ukraine, at least **148 Ukrainian citizens still remain captive in Donbas**. We reiterate that the relevant provision of the Minsk Package of measures apply to all illegally detained Ukrainian citizens, including those in captivity in Russia. We demand their immediate and unconditional release.

Distinguished colleagues,

As we repeatedly stressed, sustainability of the ceasefire regime in Donbas has a direct impact for progress in implementation of other aspects of the Minsk agreements. We should continue to maintain our focus on this objective.

Ukraine reiterates that freedom of movement and full access by the SMM throughout militant-controlled area, which has not been the case until now, remain crucial for comprehensive and reliable monitoring and verification of the implementation of the Minsk agreements. We are concerned over continuing significant impediments that the SMM faces in the areas under the control of the combined Russian-militant groups, in particular while attempting to access the border area.

The SMM report of 19 October, in particular, referred to an incident between SMM monitors and individuals who introduced themselves as “customs officials” and refused access to the SMM into “LPR”-controlled Izvaryne (54km south-east of Luhansk), a town with an international border crossing point. One of them told the SMM that only the permission from the “LPR” “ministry of state security” was applicable for gaining access.

Armed “LPR” members also denied the SMM access to a military compound in Stakhanov (50km west of Luhansk) and in “DPR”-controlled Lukove (41km north-east of Mariupol), claiming the SMM should have announced its visit in advance. While leaving the village, the SMM overheard threats to be shot if returning to the location.

The current conclusion of the SMM, which was reiterated at the briefing in Vienna on 17 October, is that SMM experiences systematic restrictions of access to the border in Luhansk oblast and the SMM does not have full access to the border in Donetsk oblast.

It remains unacceptable that the SMM UAVs continue to be exposed to jamming while flying over the occupied areas, as regularly registered in the SMM reports. It is no

coincidence that UAV jamming is persistent over militant-controlled territory, where the combined Russian-militant forces still have much to hide. These persisting impediments to the SMM activities are contrary to the outcomes of the Normandy Summit in Paris of 2 October and the commitments undertaken by Russia. We urge the Russian Federation to promptly take steps to allow unhindered performance by the OSCE SMM of its functions throughout the occupied areas, in particular at the border area, which has been inaccessible for monitoring for more than a year.

Mr. Chairman,

The ceasefire in Donbas over the past seven weeks is a good opportunity for progress, but not yet progress itself on resolving the conflict and restoring Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the affected areas. For over a year the Russian Federation and its proxies acted contrary to the undertaken commitments.

Consistent effort must be made to seek good faith implementation by the Russian Federation and the militants it supports of all provisions of the Minsk agreements, in particular the withdrawal of heavy weapons, mercenaries and the Russian regular armed forces from the occupied territories in Donbas, exchange of prisoners, resuming the Ukraine's control of the Ukrainian-Russian state border under the OSCE monitoring.

The interests of peace and security in Europe require that Russia restores its respect for international law and the OSCE principles and commitments. We urge Russia to put an end to its aggression against Ukraine and reverse the illegal occupation and annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which remain an integral part of Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.