



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

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Statement on illegal and fake so called “elections” in the Russia-occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1201st special meeting of the Permanent Council,
12 November 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

We are grateful to the Italian Chairmanship for convening this special meeting of the Permanent Council upon request of the delegation of Ukraine. The request for this urgent meeting was prompted by the developments in the occupied parts of Donbas, prior to which the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Italy’s Foreign Minister Enzo Moavero Milanesi issued a statement on 8 November, expressing his extreme concern and calling on relevant parties to prevent those developments from happening. We thank the Chairmanship for establishing the video link with the SMM Chief Monitor Ambassador E.Apakan and are grateful for his update.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Russian Federation flagrantly defied the calls and appeals of the OSCE and its participating States, of the international community and international organizations. The Russian Federation flagrantly defied the interests of peace and security as it proceeded yesterday with the conduct of illegal and fake so called “elections” in the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. Again Russia resorted to a gross violation of the core OSCE principles, enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, and the basic norms of international law relating to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. Russia took deliberate actions in the occupied parts of Donbas which had compounded the breach of the Constitution and the national legislation of Ukraine as well as ran contrary to the letter and spirit of the Minsk agreements, thus further exacerbating Russia’s violations of its own commitments under the Minsk documents. Apart from severely undermining the implementation of the Minsk agreements, Russia’s actions delivered a heavy blow to the efforts of trust-building dialogue and co-operation pursued within the OSCE in the current risky and unpredictable security environment. We get again convinced that stability and predictability may only return if we are able to defend our agreed principles and common values as well as show resolve in ensuring correction of clear

and gross violations of OSCE principles and commitments that have been perpetrated by the Russian authorities.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Russian Federation willfully opted for a provocative and escalatory course of action. As stated by the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko, “Russia assumed full responsibility and confirmed its participation in the occupation taking a direct role in the organization of these fake “elections”. Against the backdrop of Russia’s blatant violations of the Minsk agreements, yesterday the President of Ukraine had a meeting with the President of France and the Federal Chancellor of Germany. We welcome their common firm and clear position.

The conduct of this illegal exercise is categorically unacceptable and we strongly condemn it. These illegal and illegitimate so called “elections” are not recognized either by Ukraine, or the international community, their results are null and void. As the delegation of Ukraine stressed in the last PC meeting, the new Russian appointees will not represent the local communities in the occupied parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine and will not acquire more authority when invited to be present at the meetings of the Trilateral contact group (TCG). They will remain who they are – members of the Russian occupation administrations in Donetsk and Luhansk.

We condemn the harassment and intimidation of the Ukrainian citizens in the occupied areas by the Russian armed formations, aiming at making them come to those fake so called “elections” amidst increase of Russian heavy weapons deployed in the occupied Donetsk and Luhansk. We take note of the findings of the SMM Spot report. The methods of intimidation were numerous, the facts are known and get documented by respective law-enforcement bodies of Ukraine. We view it as another crime that has been committed against Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. Every effort will be made by the Ukrainian authorities to bring the responsible to account.

Having knowledge and experience of Russia’s hybrid war against Ukraine of the last over 4 years and the staging grounds of this ongoing aggression, we strongly urge the Russian Federation to refrain from pursuing further escalatory scenarios which Russia has obviously developed, in particular in view of elections in Ukraine in the next year.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Ukrainian authorities wish to enable the local population in the temporarily occupied territory of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine to elect their legitimate representatives in a free and fair voting. As envisaged by the Minsk agreements, this can happen only through the conduct of the local elections which are in full compliance with the Ukrainian legislation and OSCE standards and are held under the OSCE/ODIHR monitoring. The Ukrainian citizens, including the returning IDPs who were forced to flee from the Russian military intervention and occupation, must have security and freedom to choose from different candidates, the Ukrainian political parties must have security and freedom for unrestricted functioning and campaigning while the Ukrainian mass media and judicial system

must have the same for performing their respective important roles. Russia's irresponsible behavior makes it again very clear that the safe and stable security environment, necessary for legitimate elections, will only be possible when the Russian troops, fighters and mercenaries withdraw from the territory of Ukraine and the illegal armed formations, operating in the occupied areas, are disarmed. These are Russia's commitments under the Minsk agreements.

Mr. Chairperson,

Among different and numerous falsehoods that we hear regularly from the Russian authorities the recent claim was that the illegal exercise organized in the occupied areas of Donbas was not regulated by the Minsk agreements and had nothing to do with them. This claim is untrue. In particular, the Law of Ukraine on peculiarities of self-governance in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions was adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in accordance with the Minsk agreements and neither this Law, nor the Minsk agreements stipulate any elections that are not consistent with the elections as determined by the Constitution and national legislation of Ukraine. A month ago the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine extended the duration of validity of the said Law until the end of 2019. The Minsk Package of measures was accompanied by a joint declaration by Heads of State/Government of the Normandy Four countries which reaffirmed respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, including by the President of the Russian Federation. The developments since then have proved that such reaffirmations from the Russian Federation bear no weight or significance for the Russian side and they are easily violated by Russia again and again.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is important to make sure that Russia bears full responsibility for these illegal actions and for their devastating effect on the peace process. The occupying State and those involved in the preparation and conduct of the illegal and fake so called "elections" must encounter additional sanctions and restrictive measures for the committed violation of international law and the Minsk agreements. We count on solidarity of the OSCE participating States in this regard. Political and diplomatic pressure should be increased upon the aggressor State to make it abide by its own commitments.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that Ukraine remains committed to the peaceful resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, started by Russia, which includes full implementation of the Minsk agreements in their entirety and de-occupation of Crimea. Sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders must be restored based on full respect for the norms and principles of international law.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.