



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Statement in response to Ambassador Martin Sajdik, Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, and Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1239th meeting of the Permanent Council,
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Mr. Chairperson,

Ukraine joins other delegations in welcoming the CiO's Special Representative Ambassador Sajdik and SMM Chief Monitor Ambassador Çevik back to the Permanent Council. We thank both of you for your comprehensive and thought-provoking reports.

Ukraine stays committed to the peaceful politico-diplomatic resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which started more than 5 years ago with Russia's armed invasion and occupation of Ukraine's parts of territory. Withdrawal of the Russian troops, hardware, militants and mercenaries from the temporarily occupied Crimea and certain areas of Donbas and restoration of Ukraine's full control over its sovereign borders remains a key prerequisite to this purpose. We continue our diplomatic efforts, in particular at the level of heads of states and diplomatic advisers. The most recent meeting in the Normandy Four format took place last Monday in Berlin, where Ukraine was represented by newly appointed Foreign Minister His Excellency Vadym Prystaiko. Preparations for the next N4 summit at the level of heads of states and governments are ongoing.

Now I would like to touch upon the current security situation in Donbas. We took note of Chief Monitor's report that a recommitment to ceasefire agreed by the TCG and starting on 21 July was a major contributing factor towards the improvement of the security situation in Donbas. It has indeed brought a certain decrease in the daily average of ceasefire violations and significantly reduced the impact of the conflict on civilians, with only two civilian casualties reported by the SMM in this period.

The same can not be said of military casualties. The Russian armed formations continue their regular attacks, albeit with a reduced intensity. In the weeks since the beginning of ceasefire, we registered almost four hundred cases of its violation by the Russian proxies, including 43 cases with the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons,

which left 12 Ukrainian servicemen dead and 32 wounded. The most glaring case took place on 6 August near Pavlopil, when 4 Ukrainian militaries were killed by a RPG rocket while installing the engineering equipment. President Zelenskyy immediately called President Putin to emphasize the importance of strict adherence to the ceasefire regime.

Nonetheless, the Russian armed formations continued their attacks: while in the first three weeks after the recommitment to the ceasefire the number of ceasefire violations remained consistently low, starting from the fourth week, that is after the abovementioned case, the security situation began to deteriorate, as confirmed by the SMM reports. We strongly condemn these violations and once again urge the Russian side to abide by its own commitments.

These commitments include withdrawal of heavy weapons from the line of contact. I wish to draw your attention to the numbers of such weapons recorded by the SMM in its report: according to it, about 80 per cent of them were spotted in the Russia-occupied parts of Donbas. In the weeks, which followed the SMM reporting period, this trend has only deteriorated. Unwillingness of the Russian side to withdraw hundreds of such weapons from the contact line underlines its intention to continue military attacks on the Ukrainian positions.

Distinguished colleagues,

As you are well aware, the Ukrainian side continues its dedicated efforts to mitigate the humanitarian consequences of the Russian aggression. Our efforts are directed, in particular, on facilitating civilians' crossing of the contact line, which remains a bridge to a normal life for millions of Ukrainian citizens living under the temporary Russian occupation.

The most critical situation persists in Luhansk region, in which Stanytsia Luhanska entry-exit checkpoint remains the only place for crossing the contact line, while the Russian side continues to deny opening an additional EECP in Zolote, ready to become operational since March 2016. Following the disengagement of forces and hardware, demining and dismantling of fortifications in Stanytsia Luhanska disengagement area, the Ukrainian side is now ready to start reconstruction of the bridge across the Siverskyi Donets river to simplify crossing the EECP for civilians.

In Donetsk region, the SMM continues to observe long queues at the checkpoints controlled by the Russian armed formations, most notably near Olenivka and Kreminets, in which so-called "regulations" restricting number of cars allowed through these checkpoints to six every 30 minutes remain in place. Last week, on 28 August, the Russian proxies fired civilian infrastructure close to the EECP near Maiorsk, forcing the Ukrainian authorities to temporarily close it to save the lives of civilians. The SMM confirmed that the people waiting in queues were evacuated to a safe place. We urge the Russian side to lift all impediments to civilians' crossing of the contact line and to stop shelling the EECPs.

We expect Ambassador Sajdik and Ambassador Çevik to pay utmost attention to these issues: ceasefire, withdrawal of the heavy weapons and making the lives of civilians safer. We need fast and sustainable progress in these fields.

Chief Monitor,

In your report, you provided a comprehensive information on the numerous restrictions and impediments, which the SMM faces daily in the Russia-occupied parts of Donbas. 94 per cent of all non-mine-related incidents took place in those territories, with the persistent trend of systematic denials of access to the border areas. Despite all the calls by international community, the Russian side refuses to lift these restrictions, clearly indicating the intention to continue its efforts aimed at concealing Kremlin's direct involvement and role in Donbas.

In this connection, we welcome increased attention of the Mission to the border areas, in particular with the use of long-range UAVs, which we witness in the SMM reports. The OSCE monitoring and verification at the Ukrainian-Russian state border remains an important part of the Minsk agreements, namely paragraph 4 of the Minsk Protocol, essential for cessation of hostilities in Donbas. The link between transparency at the border and security situation along the contact line has been established long ago, and there is no need to dwell on it at length. Numerous occasions, on which the SMM was registering trains, vehicles and cargo trucks moving in the border areas where there are no official border crossing points, as well as modern Russian weapon systems, remain a key part of the Mission's activities. This is a real added value, which the SMM contributes to the resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, as it reveals Russia's armed aggression and occupation of Ukraine's parts of territory. We urge the Russian side to assume its responsibility, both political and financial one, for the previous incidents of shooting down the SMM's long-range UAVs, and to stop attacking the Mission's assets, which belong to all 57 participating States. We also call on Russia to allow opening of additional patrol hub and forward patrol bases of the SMM in the Russia-occupied border areas, which would provide the Mission with the necessary capacities to implement its mandate of monitoring and verification.

Ambassador, we took note of the SMM's observation on a very limited scope for freedom of expression and of the media in the Russia-occupied parts of Donbas. As we reiterated on numerous occasions, establishing and reporting facts on alleged violations of fundamental OSCE principles and commitments represents an essential part of the SMM's mandate. We continue to believe that the Mission's unique field presence in those territories must be used to the full extent to provide participating States with a verified and unbiased information on the dire situation in the Russia-occupied parts of Donbas, even as we understand how complicated it is. We regret that in the report you have presented today to the Permanent Council, no place had been found for such critical topics as pressure on religious communities, severely limited access to information in Ukrainian language, restrictions of access of international humanitarian organizations, developments related to the Sea of Azov, and environmental challenges in Donbas, all of which were present in your previous report. This is a serious setback in the Mission's reporting, which should be reversed. We also urge the Russian side to stop intimidating civilian unarmed monitors. They

must enjoy the right to speak and move freely in the occupied parts of Donbas, in full accordance with the SMM mandate.

The same freedom of movement must be provided to the Mission in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine's parts, which remain temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation. It is unacceptable that for five years, Russia has been denying access of the Mission to the peninsula. We know too little on what is happening in Crimea, which remains a "grey zone" for observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms. As such "grey zones" should have no place in the OSCE area, we remind the SMM on our previous calls to launch a distance monitoring of the situation in Crimea, beginning with the contacts with victims and witnesses of persecutions, lawyers, NGOs, and independent mass media.

Concluding my statement, I wish to thank Ambassador Sajdik and Ambassador Çevik, as well as the entire SMM team for their hard and dedicated work of contributing to peaceful resolution of the conflict, started by Russia, as well as to upholding the OSCE principles and commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.