



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

**Statement in response to Ambassador Gyorgy Varga,
Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission
at two Russian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border**

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1187th meeting of the Permanent Council,
31 May 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of Ukraine warmly welcomes Ambassador Gyorgy Varga, the Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border, back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his detailed report and presentation.

We express our appreciation of the work of the Mission that operates in difficult and restrictive conditions. Due to the resistance of the Russian Federation, the OSCE Observer Mission remains limited to two out of eleven checkpoints of the Russian-Ukrainian state border segment not controlled by the Ukrainian authorities, despite objective needs and strong support of the OSCE participating States for expansion of the geographic scope of the Mission and enabling monitoring between these border crossings. Even at these two BCPs significant restrictions of the freedom of movement within the BCPs were imposed by the Russian authorities. We would appreciate clarifications of the Chief Observer about why these restrictions were moved from the part of the report concerning the issues still to be solved.

Although with limited mandate and small size the OM continues to provide useful information concerning Russia's direct support for the illegal armed formations in Donbas. While Russia committed itself to withdraw its military, mercenaries and fighters from Donbas, their illegal flow into Ukraine continues. During the reporting period 972 crossings of people in military-style outfits were observed, thus bringing the total to 36.800 crossings of this category since the beginning of the OM's operation. Russian citizens acting as foreign fighters or mercenaries continue to fight against the Ukrainian authorities in Donbas in Russia-instigated conflict. The Russian Government conceals Russian losses and casualties. A fraction of the losses is revealed by reports of the OSCE Observer Mission, in particular about 23 ambulances and 6 funeral minivans crossing from Ukraine into Russia during the reporting period, thus bringing the total to 507 ambulances and 99 funeral and cargo vans with sign "Cargo 200" – a code for Russian military

casualties. By these actions Russia continues to breach the Minsk agreements as well as the OSCE principles and commitments, in particular on border security and combating terrorism.

The link between efforts at de-escalation and control along the border underscores the utmost relevance of the Minsk Protocol of 5 September 2014 whereby the signatories committed themselves to ensure permanent monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian border and verification by the OSCE with the creation of security zones in the border regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation. This crucial part of the Minsk agreements has not yet been implemented.

Mr. Chairperson,

We condemn in the strongest terms the Russian practice of sending the so-called “humanitarian convoys” in violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and the principles of international humanitarian law. It is notable that during the reporting period 3 Russian convoys violated Ukraine’s border at the Donetsk BCP, but since 22 August 2014 the OM observed 74 such convoys. We insist that the humanitarian assistance be delivered based on the international mechanism as envisaged by the Minsk agreements. We again strongly urge the Russian Federation to send deliveries of humanitarian nature through border check-points, controlled by the Government of Ukraine. The failure by Russia to do so further demonstrates the interest to hide the real content of the deliveries.

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the informal consultations convened by the Chairmanship on measures to improve transparency in the part of the Ukrainian-Russian state border currently not controlled by the Ukrainian government. It is important to attach particular attention to the implementation of the updated SMM’s Concept Paper of 6 September 2016 on Monitoring the Ukrainian-Russian State Border as well as to enhancing the OSCE Observer Mission’s capabilities for effective monitoring, including through the use of technical equipment. We also encourage active OSCE facilitation in developing agreed preparatory measures with regard to the reinstatement of full control of the State border by the Ukrainian government in accordance with the Minsk agreements and based on the OSCE Border Security and Management Concept.

Ukraine deeply regrets that the Russian Federation continues to be the only country objecting the expansion of the OSCE Observer Mission. Russia’s position on this issue serves as litmus test of Russia’s readiness to peacefully resolve the conflict which it started. We reiterate our persistent call on Russia to uphold its commitments and proceed to permanent monitoring and verification by the OSCE on the Ukrainian-Russian state border with creation of the security zone in border areas of Russia and Ukraine which would become a major input into the conflict resolution efforts.

In conclusion, we once again thank Ambassador G.Varga and his able team for their dedicated work and wish every success in their future activities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.