



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

PC.DEL/31/18
19 January 2018

ENGLISH only

Statement on “Russia’s ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea”

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1172nd meeting of the Permanent Council,
18 January 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

At this first regular Permanent Council meeting of 2018, the Ukrainian Delegation wishes to emphasize the undiminished grave security challenges stemming from Russia’s ongoing aggression against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. The conflict, started by Russia through military invasion and occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and launching a hybrid warfare in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, will soon enter its fifth year. Over all this time, the violence has never effectively stopped.

Number one provision of the Minsk agreements on immediate, comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire still awaits its implementation. Yet another recommitment to ceasefire reached at the TCG meeting and effective from midnight of 23 December 2017 is not respected by the Russia-led forces in Donbas with a tendency to escalation in the number of ceasefire violations. In the last 24 hours 3 Ukrainian servicemen were killed and five were wounded. The SMM Deputy Chief Monitor pointed out in his briefing last Friday to the average number of violations at five hundred per day since 28 December 2017.

The established contact line of 19 September 2014 has been entirely disregarded by the Russian side. After signing the Minsk Memorandum, the Russian hybrid forces seized hundreds of square kilometers beyond the contact line, including the city of Debaltseve. They continue fortifying and digging new military positions, as registered recently by the SMM near Starolaspa, Pryvitne, Kalynove-Borshchuvate and Zernove.

Contrary to Russia’s commitments, the withdrawal of its armed formations and heavy weapons under the OSCE verification has not started. Instead of disarmament of illegal armed formations and withdrawal of mercenaries, they have been additionally trained, equipped and organized into two Army Corps, fully integrated into Russian command and control system exercising effective control over the occupied areas. The SMM continues to register hundreds of heavy weapons in the

non-government controlled areas of Donbas which can be used at any given moment of choice of the Russian military command. These weapons were used during the current winter ceasefire, as it was on 13 January, when the Ukrainian positions near Vodyane (Mariupol) were shelled from 122mm artillery. MLRS, surface-to-air missile systems and artillery pieces are reported by the SMM to move in a zone north-east of Mariupol within which deployment of heavy armaments and military equipment is proscribed.

While decreasing the number of attacks in the ceasefire period, the Russia-led forces attempted to make them more targeted through extensive use of aerial reconnaissance. In these last few weeks three Russia-made military UAVs “Orlan-10”, which had earlier been spotted by the SMM in Donbas, were downed when flying over the government-controlled areas.

Neither the permanent monitoring and verification by the SMM at the Ukrainian-Russian state border with the establishment of a security zone, nor the reinstatement of full control at the border by the Government of Ukraine were implemented. Even the limited monitoring of the border areas not controlled by the Government is strictly conditioned and hindered by continued refusal of Moscow and its proxies to provide security guarantees which would enable the SMM to open additional forward patrol bases and patrol hubs there.

While the long-awaited release by Moscow and its proxies of 74 hostages took place on 27 December, over one hundred Ukrainian citizens remain captive in parts of Donbas effectively controlled by Russia, and dozens of Ukrainian political prisoners remain in detention under fabricated charges on the territory of the Russian Federation and in the temporarily occupied Crimea.

Safe access, delivery, storage, and distribution of humanitarian assistance on the basis of an international mechanism remain blocked by Moscow and its proxies in the occupied part of Donbas. Strict restrictions on operation of international humanitarian organisations remain in place since 2015. Russia continues to send its so called “humanitarian convoys” in violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and the principles of international humanitarian law. The aims pursued by the Russian authorities are far from humanitarian, which was again proved recently by the denial of access of the SMM patrol to a compound in the southern outskirts of Luhansk city, where such Russian convoy arrived on 22 December.

Flouting its Minsk commitments, Moscow took deliberate unilateral steps further aggravating the situation, among them the recognition of the so called “documents”, issued by illegal structures in Donbas, and seizure of industrial assets in non-government controlled areas. We await information from the SMM regarding this week’s reports about introduction in non-government controlled areas of Donetsk region of a ban on travel to government-controlled territories affecting civilians, among them teachers, doctors and other categories.

Distinguished colleagues,

Speaking two days ago to heads of diplomatic missions in Ukraine, the President of Ukraine particularly noted the courageous and dedicated activity of the SMM monitors. At the same time, we must be vocal in emphasizing that the

SMM, which was deployed upon decision of all participating States, continues to encounter unacceptable restrictions and hazards in the areas of Donbas, effectively controlled by Russia. The SMM informed in its weekly report of 10 January that during the reporting period its freedom of movement was restricted 26 times in non-government-controlled areas and only once in government-controlled areas (in addition to restrictions due to mines and UXO). The access of the monitors to permanent storage sites and heavy weapons holding areas is denied almost on the daily basis by Russia's fighters who cite orders from their superiors. These fighters attack the patrols with angry remarks and damage the SMM vehicles while being "apparently intoxicated", as recently reported by the mission. This is not acceptable and we urge again Russia to finally assume its responsibilities, lift any restrictions on the freedom of movement of the SMM and put an end to intimidations. The OSCE must be able to receive full information and have full picture of the developments on the ground.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Russian aggression against Ukraine is not limited to Donbas, but continues in the occupied Crimea where Russia consolidates its military grip and perpetrates grave violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law.

Last week, additional numbers of S-400 long range air defense missile system were deployed near the city of Sevastopol, reinforcing the threats of Russia's aggressive and revisionist policies.

The most recent report "Freedom in the World 2018" highlights the total lack of freedom in the occupied Crimea (9/100 aggregate score), where the targeted repressions make the situation even worse than in the Russian Federation (20/100).

We condemn yet another repressive act of conviction of a Ukrainian citizen Volodymyr Balukh to nearly four years imprisonment by the occupation "court" last Tuesday. The case was fabricated specifically to punish him for his public pro-Ukrainian position.

Yesterday the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine issued a protest to the Russian authorities in connection with a forced transfer of 6 Ukrainian citizens, Crimean Tatars Muslim Aliev, Emir-Usein Kuku, Vadym Siruk, Enver Bekirov, Refat Alimov and Arsen Jepparov, who had been detained in the temporarily occupied Crimea under trumped-up charges, to the territory of the Russian Federation. We draw attention of the Russian delegation in the OSCE that the international humanitarian law prohibits the transfer of citizens from the occupied territory to the territory of the occupant country.

This case and many others underscore the need for heightened attention of the OSCE and its autonomous Institutions to the plight of repressions and persecutions in the occupied Crimea.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the last decade the Russian Federation has established its track-record of flagrant disregard for its international obligations and commitments and for the rules-based security order underpinned by the norms and principles of the Helsinki Final

Act and the Paris Charter. In the interests of European security it remains critically important to maintain and step up politico-diplomatic pressure on Russia to make it return to the tenets of international law and implement the undertaken commitments. We again urge Russia to reverse the illegal occupation of Crimea and Sevastopol, and to stop its aggression against Ukraine, including by withdrawing its troops from the Ukrainian territory and fully implementing its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.