



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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**Statement on “Russia’s on-going aggression against Ukraine
and illegal occupation of Crimea”**

As delivered by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1105th meeting of the Permanent Council,
16 June 2016

Mr. Chairman,

We wish to start by warmly welcoming the release and return to Ukraine of Yuriy Soloshenko and Hennadiy Afanasiev –Ukrainian citizens, who were in illegal detention in Russia as political prisoners since 2014. To facilitate the release the Ukrainian authorities handed over to Moscow two Russian agents, arrested for instigating Donbas-like separatist actions in Ukraine’s south.

We reiterate our gratitude for solidarity and support of our international partners in seeking release of the Ukrainian citizens. We consider release of Mr.Soloshenko and Mr.Afanasiev as another important step towards full implementation of the paragraph 6 of the Minsk Package of measures, envisaging release of all hostages and illegally detained persons on the basis of “all-for-all” principle, which is long overdue.

Dozens of the Ukrainian citizens remain behind bars in Russia under fabricated charges, including Oleh Sentsov, Oleksandr Kolchenko and others. At least 113 Ukrainians remain in captivity in the occupied part of Donbas and the process of their release has been blocked by the Russia’s proxies. We reiterate that release of all hostages and illegally detained persons remains a priority and they must all safely return home.

Distinguished colleagues,

We took note of the statement, made last week by Russian Deputy Defence Minister Antonov following the Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting in Astana and circulated by Russia’s Defense Ministry. The Russian official

declared commitment of his country to counter “three evil forces – terrorism, extremism and separatism”. Indeed, these are the forces that pose a very serious threat to peace and security and which must be countered with determination and joint efforts, as also recognized by the OSCE. However, a big problem remains that contrary to declarations Moscow fuels and provides full support to terrorism, extremism and separatism on Ukraine’s territory, including by direct military intervention, as observed in Crimea and Donbas.

Ongoing deterioration in Donbas remains a matter of utmost concern. The combined Russian-separatist forces continue to act contrary to the efforts of the international community investing in peaceful resolution of the conflict. They intensify hostilities, keeping the Ukrainian positions and the residential areas along the line of contact under constant threat of heavy weapons shellings, attacks with small arms, sniper fire and subversive activities. Despite the efforts for disengagement the SMM reports about the Russian hybrid forces advancing their forward positions in Horlivka and Stanytsya Luhanska closer to the line of contact. We condemn their practice of shellings from the residential areas that the combined Russian-separatist forces resort to, as registered by the SMM reports, to deliberately expose to danger the civilian population.

The toll of casualties remains extremely high and painful for Ukrainian people. 6 Ukrainian soldiers were killed and 46 were wounded between 8 and 14 June. It is of particular concern that the civilian population remains under attack. On 13 June a local resident was killed in Artemove, near Toretsk. Two children were wounded in Avdiyivka and Chermalyk on 11 and 14 June respectively.

It cannot be a mere coincidence that intensification of hostilities by Russian hybrid forces followed their attacks on the SMM monitoring capabilities, including downing of three UAVs over the occupied areas of Donbas and disconnection of the SMM cameras near the Donetsk airport, which remain disabled for almost four weeks. We note that the Russian delegation has failed so far to provide a requested update on measures taken by the Russian side in the JCCC to resolve the problem with the cameras. There is also a need to address seriously the SMM report of 13 June, which contains eyewitness accounts about the missile traces hitting the SMM UAV over Korsun and about militants collecting the UAV remnants immediately after downing. The UAVs belong to the OSCE and their remnants must be returned.

The past week was again marked by a number of incidents, when the SMM monitors were denied access, all happened in the occupied areas of Donbas, including in the border areas. Orchestrating so-called “mass protests” with anti-OSCE slogans, with the most recent case happening in Donetsk on 10 June, is an instrument of intimidating and exerting pressure on the monitors. We reiterate our condemnation of such practices and our call on Russia to ensure they are not repeated.

The SMM reports about persistent problems the monitors face while attempting to approach the uncontrolled sections of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. However, even with limited and strictly conditioned access to the border, the OSCE findings are telling about Russia’s steps towards legalizing fake “republics” that Moscow has created and militarily backed up in the occupied areas of Donbas.

We already drew attention of the Permanent Council to the SMM report in May, indicating that people with so called “DPR passports” and vehicles with “DPR licence plates” are allowed to enter the territory of the Russian Federation. These findings received additional confirmation after the SMM’s visit to the closed BCP “Marynivka” on 10 June, where the monitors observed two vehicles with so called “DPR licence plates”, waiting to cross into the Russian territory. We again request the Russian delegation to provide explanations on this matter which indicates yet another flagrant violation by Russia of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Mr.Chairman,

The fundamental issue, which impacts the resolution of the conflict based on the Minsk agreements, is that Russia continues to act as an aggressor and Ukraine is a victim of this aggression.

Ukraine’s approach is based on our aspiration to bring peace back to Donbas and make sure that Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity be respected. We remain convinced that full and good-faith implementation of the Minsk agreements by all signatories is critical for conflict resolution and therefore are persistent in our calls on Russia to reciprocate the steps, already taken by Ukraine on the implementation track.

To bring the conflict to an end requires as an immediate measure to cease fire. Ensuring security is the basic requirement for progress on all other aspects. This is the logic and sequence of the Minsk agreements, to which

Ukraine remains committed. We need immediate implementation of the initial security provisions of the Minsk Package, establishment of security zones in the border areas of Ukraine and Russia with OSCE border monitoring to prevent flows of weaponry and personnel into Donbas and enhancing the international presence in the conflict zones by deploying an armed police mission.

Decisions taken in Moscow led to the conflict, it depends on Moscow to take decisions to stop the shellings and embark on conflict resolution.

Distinguished colleagues,

The human rights situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, illegally occupied by Russia, remains extremely worrisome. We note, in particular, that whereabouts of Ervin Ibragimov, member of the Executive Committee of the World Congress of Crimean Tatars and member of regional Mejlis, abducted in Bakhchisaray three weeks ago, remain unknown. Recently the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances of the Human Rights Council requested the Russian Federation to provide available information on the case, including the results of the investigation. We call on Russia to duly respond to the international concerns over the destiny of Mr. Ibragimov and other Ukrainian citizens who disappeared on the occupied peninsula.

We condemn the recent sentencing of Andriy Kolomiets by the so-called “Simferopol court” to 10 years in jail on allegations of attacking riot police officers on Kyiv’s Maidan in 2014. This false pretext is often used by the occupying authorities to fabricate criminal cases against the Ukrainian activists in Crimea.

We again urge the Russian Federation, as an occupying power, to take responsibility for stopping all human rights violations on the peninsula and to allow free and unconditional access for permanent international monitoring in Crimea.

Mr. Chairman,

We conclude by reiterating our persistent call on the Russian Federation to immediately take practical steps to implement its commitments on peaceful resolution in Donbas, undertaken in Minsk, and to exert its influence on the militants it supports to do likewise. As this has not yet happened, it remains

critically important to maintain the political and economic sanctions, which were imposed in response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, to stimulate Moscow's return to the tenets of international law.

We urge Russia to restore its respect for the norms of international law and the OSCE principles and commitments, to halt its aggression against Ukraine and reverse the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

Thank you, Mr.Chairman.