



**Permanent Mission of Ukraine**  
to the International  
Organizations in Vienna

## **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 1233<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
20 June 2019

**Mr. Chairperson,**

We thank the Slovak Chairmanship for attaching priority attention to the challenges of the ongoing Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Last week, Minister Lajčák paid a visit to Ukraine, for the second time this year as Chairperson-in-Office, to explore steps towards a peaceful political solution to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. He was received by President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy and had meetings with Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin and the head of Ukrainian delegation to the TCG Leonid Kuchma. We share Minister Lajčák's acknowledgement that any positive development will be only possible with a guaranteed and lasting ceasefire. It is impossible to proceed further with fulfilment of the Minsk agreements until their very first security provisions on the ceasefire remain unimplemented.

Last Monday and Tuesday, President Zelenskyy paid official visits to France and Germany to meet with the leadership of these countries and to give a new political impetus to the establishment of peace. We welcome mutual understanding on the necessity to reinvigorate the Normandy format and to hold a meeting of the foreign policy advisers in near future to lay ground for the next N4 Summit. We call upon Russia to follow this track, to resume its participation in the Normandy format and to start finally fulfilling its own commitments as a party to the conflict and as a party to the Minsk agreements.

Unfortunately, security situation in Donbas continues to deteriorate. The last week was marked by rapidly growing number of ceasefire violations, confirmed in particular by the SMM, including the use of the Minsk-proscribed weapons. The Russian armed formations continue their shellings of Ukrainian military positions and residential areas, in many cases using the heavy artillery of 122 and 152mm. The most glaring case took place on 14 June, when the Russian fighters targeted residential area of Mar'inika from self-propelled howitzers, leaving 5 civilians

wounded. The SMM reported about this attack. Immediately after that, howitzers were moved by the Russian side to the residential areas of the Donetsk city, inviting fire in response, which did not follow. Such response fire would later be used by Russia for propaganda purposes.

The Bakhmut Agrarian Union's farm near Novoluhanske has been targeted for the second time since the beginning of the year. We fully share the SMM's view that shelling of this facility constitutes a major environmental threat due to the possible leaks of hazardous waste into the Siverskiy Donets basin. It underscores the major environmental challenges stemming from Russia's unwillingness to cease violence in Donbas.

The Russian armed formations continue their military provocations: in its daily report of 17 June, the SMM informed on damage to residential properties in Donetsk city caused by automatic grenade launcher and in Zolote-5 caused by gunfire. In both cases, the distance to the Ukrainian military positions far exceeded the fire range of the respective weapons.

Inside Stanytsia Luhanska disengagement area, an SMM mini-UAV spotted on 15 June an extension of previously reported positions of the Russian armed formations with an anti-aircraft gun near it, putting again under question the real intentions of the Russian side on disengagement in this area. On 17 June, the SMM camera recorded another ceasefire violation assessed as inside the disengagement area.

Russia's military activities in the occupied parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions remain a source of deep concern. Their scale, combined with unpredictability of Kremlin's plans, requires close attention of the OSCE and its executive structures. In its weekly report of 12 June, the SMM reported 231 weapons outside of designated storage sites in the Russia-occupied territories of Donbas, compared to only 60 in the previous week. It means that 171 heavy weapons were moved from their storage sites to the unknown locations, increasing risk of military escalation and jeopardizing the lives of the local population.

It is clear to all that to sustain this level of military activities, a constant replenishment of fuel, lubricants and ammunition is needed. Last Saturday, on 15 June, an SMM long-range UAV spotted "military trucks travelling back and forth between a railway station and a warehouse in Sukhodilsk near the border with the Russian Federation". The tracks from this railway station, as emphasised by the SMM, "extend eastwards to the border with the Russian Federation south-east of Izvaryne", where the SMM patrols are regularly denied access and ordered to leave immediately after reaching the border crossing point. I request the Russian delegation to provide explanations on what cargo was unloaded by military trucks from the train cars and further delivered "to a walled compound with a large warehouse". Russia's behaviour leaves no doubt why in the last PC meeting the Russian delegation reacted so negatively to the Informal meeting on ways to improve transparency along the Ukrainian-Russian state border held on 12 June. It is the issue of transparency that would affect Russia's transborder military supplies and therefore disturbs the Russian side the most. This is the obvious reason why severe restrictions are maintained by the Russian armed formations for the SMM patrols attempting to reach the border areas, "thus limiting the capacity for the Mission to comprehensively monitor these

areas”. On 14 June, “at a mobile checkpoint in Sosnivske, an armed member of the armed formations denied the SMM access to the village, citing “orders from superiors not to let the SMM through the checkpoint”. We again urge the Russian side to lift these restrictions and to revoke such orders. We emphasise the imperative of implementing paragraph 4 of the Minsk Protocol, signed by Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE, on the permanent monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian border and verification by the OSCE.

We also urge the Russian side to lift all impediments it had imposed on the entry-exit checkpoints along the contact line in Donbas, including on the number of vehicles permitted to enter the checkpoints (six cars in each direction every 30 minutes), registered recently by the SMM as being in place since 1 June. It is unacceptable that not only Russia blocks opening of additional EECF in Zolote, which remains ready since March 2016, but also complicates conditions of crossing the existing ones, forcing people to wait in line for many hours with the outside temperature above 30 degrees, to spend the night at the checkpoint or to start queuing as early as 03:30 in the morning. In the last PC meeting, we drew attention to the SMM established fact that the Russian armed formations planted two anti-tank mines near Olenivka entry-exit checkpoint, in the same area between road lanes where two civilians lost their lives in February this year. Instead of removing those mines, the Russian fighters laid eight anti-tank mines more in the same area, posing serious threats to civilians, as emphasised in the SMM weekly report of 19 June.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

At every meeting of the Permanent Council, we inform participating States on the ongoing political persecutions of Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians in Russia-occupied Crimean peninsula. I regret to state that the last week was marked by further repressive acts.

Last Tuesday, on 18 June, the Russian court in Rostov-on-Don has illegally sentenced 5 Crimean Tatars under the trumped-up charges of alleged belonging to Hizb ut-Tahrir, an organisation legal in Ukraine, but banned by the Russian occupation authorities, to the terms of 12 up to 17 years. Ukraine expresses a resolute protest to this decision as yet another case of the use of antiterrorist legislation to cover the political repressions against the Crimean Tatar people.

The Russian occupation authorities continue denying proper medical assistance to those Ukrainian citizens who need it most. Despite the decision of the European Court of Human Rights of 11 June, they refuse to place a disabled Crimean Tatar Edem Bekirov to hospital. We reiterate that Russia must immediately and unconditionally release all Ukrainian citizens, illegally held in Kremlin’s captivity, including in Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine. Until that moment, they must enjoy medical assistance and legal protection.

We again urge the Russian Federation to reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea and to stop its aggression against Ukraine, including by withdrawing its armed formations from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and fully implementing its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**