**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT ON RUSSIA'S ONGOING AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE AND ILLEGAL OCCUPATION OF CRIMEA

Delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 24 June 2021

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madame Chair,

In March 2014 this body, the Permanent Council, decided to deploy the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine with the aim of reducing tensions and fostering peace, stability and security, and of supporting the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments. Among other things, it was mandated to report on the security situation, establish facts in response to specific incidents, and monitor respect for human rights.

The SMM has done a remarkable job of fulfilling its mandate. However, its ability to fully do so has been – and continues to be – limited by restrictions on its operations.

First and foremost, the SMM's observers are denied access to large parts of its mandated area of operation, which consists of the entire territory of Ukraine: They are denied entry to the Crimean Peninsula, occupied by the Russian Federation in violation of international law. They are also systematically denied access to parts of the non-government-controlled areas in Donbas, particularly areas close to the Ukraine-Russia state border. In addition, the Mission's UAVs continue to experience increasing levels of signal interference as well as small-arms fire. In fact, the numbers of such incidents set new records just a few weeks ago.

The restricted freedom of movement is exacerbated by the problems caused by the prolonged closure of crossing points, particularly those controlled by the armed formations in the NGCA. Furthermore, the hostile approach frequently displayed by the armed formations towards the SMM's observers has a serious, negative impact on their working conditions – and in some cases also on their safety and security.

Once again, Norway calls on all parties to enable the SMM to fulfil its mandate. We particularly call on the Russian Federation to provide the SMM safe and secure access to the whole territory of Ukraine, including Crimea, and to use its considerable influence on the armed formations it backs to ensure that the SMM's freedom of

movement is respected, and that its UAVs and cameras are not jammed or damaged. The OSCE Participating States have mandated the SMM to carry out tasks in the entire territory of Ukraine. All Participating States have a responsibility to enable the SMM to fulfil its mandate. We also urge Russia to engage constructively in the Trilateral Contact Group with a view to breaking the current stalemate on most points.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further complicated the operations of the SMM and the burden place on the individual observers. Norway appreciates the Mission's efforts to adjust to the consequences of COVID-19 to protect the health and safety of its staff and the people they meet. The pandemic must not be used as a pretext for placing undue restrictions on their work.

I would like to round off on a more positive note: Last week I participated in a video meeting with the observers seconded by Norway. As expected, they described difficult working conditions, mainly due to the restrictions imposed on their freedom of movement. However, I was struck by their positive attitude and the commitment they expressed to their work and the whole Mission. As Participating States, we should be equally committed to enabling all observers to carry out their tasks. Having mandated the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, we owe its staff our support.

To conclude, allow me to reiterate Norway's strong support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, including the Crimean Peninsula and the adjoining territorial waters.

Thank you.