



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 Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1337th meeting of the Permanent Council
30 September 2021

Madam Chairperson,

I would like to raise once again the issue of illegal elections the Russian Federation held in Ukraine's occupied territories.

This latest act of aggression against Ukraine's sovereignty not only violates Russia's obligations under the Minsk agreements and intentionally derails the peace process but was also accompanied with large-scale falsifications and coercion.

In view of people's ignorance of the vote, Russian occupation administrations were tasked to draw a high turnout in support for the ruling party "United Russia". Election buses were crossing the border half-empty, while government-controlled media outlets were responsible for producing a necessary picture of broad popular support. In the meantime, most falsifications were done through the e-vote system – personal data of voters had been forcefully collected before, especially among state-paid employees, and entered into the system without their participation.

Even the passports issued just minutes before the vote are fraudulent, as they contain improper information, thus, providing neither rights nor any social benefits to the passport holders. Despite Russian humanitarian rhetoric, the issuance of passports pursues the only goal – to prepare grounds for future aggressive acts against Ukraine. That clearly displays the lack of political will in Moscow to settle the conflict.

Furthermore, after the results were pooled, it appears that a certain Mr Zakhar Prilepin has qualified for the State Duma. He is well known for the participation in the Russian illegal armed formation in Ukrainian occupied territories. Also, Aleksandr Borodai tried his fortune to win the primaries for the ruling party "United Russia". This Russian citizen is known for being in charge of the Russian occupation administration in Donetsk in May 2014, the very first days of intervention.

The Russian authorities are very generous for those who help to wage the armed aggression against Ukraine, not only by decorating them with medals but also allowing to be elected to the parliament.

Those two are a vivid example how Russia administers the conflict, however, still trying to delude this Council despite existing overwhelming evidence that the conflict has been invented, led, financed, directed, supported militarily and is continued by Russia.

Excellencies,

The security situation in occupied certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions is further deteriorating.

In the past week, the SMM registered 2,445 ceasefire violations, including 466 explosions, a 155 per cent increase compared with the previous week.

The SMM freedom of movement continues to be significantly restricted, especially in the border areas. Neither we heard from the Russian side a commitment to restarting UAVs long-range flights.

Furthermore, the Russian armed formations have intensified applying new tactics of dropping explosives over the Ukrainian positions with the use of UAVs. Only over the last week these illegal activities were documented in the vicinity of such settlements as Lebedynske, Shyrokyne, Talakivka, Vodiane.

These indiscriminate attacks against Ukrainian armed forces pose additional risks for the civilians given already existing a high number of unexploded ordinances. This also highlights the urgency for de-mining activities.

However, the Russian armed formation kept remote delivering of anti-personnel landmines POM-2, as we documented it this week in the vicinity of New York settlement.

The ongoing Russian aggression still claims human toll. Due to shellings one Ukrainian soldier was killed and six wounded.

According to the latest UN report, the Russian-led conflict continues to impact over 3.4 million Ukrainian citizens on both side of the contact line.

Keeping in mind a dire humanitarian situation, it is frustrating to see Russia inventing new and new impediments for opening of the two additional EECPs Schastia and Zolote. Due to the restrictions on freedom of movement across the contact line, as reported by the UN mission, many residents of occupied territory travelled up to 1,000 km for over 30 hours, to reach Government-controlled territory through the Russian Federation.

By keeping the contact line closed and with coercive passportization Russia further undermines the peace process contrary to its obligations under the Minsk agreements, at the same time trying to vilify Ukraine.

Furthermore, on September 23, the SMM spotted the presence of advanced target and acquisition radar Kasta-2E1 in temporarily occupied Donetsk region.

Would the Russian representative be so kind to quote any specific provision of the Minsk agreements obliging the Russian Federation to supply such sophisticated military equipment to the occupied territories?

However, this yet another evidence of the presence of a modern Russian military equipment on the Ukrainian side together with the closure of BOM further highlights the need for a target-oriented discussion in the Council in order to enable opening new forward patrol basis and enhancing SMM's technical capabilities in order to implement the Minsk agreements provisions providing for permanent monitoring and verification of the Ukrainian-Russian state border as well as the creation of a border security area.

We call upon the SMM to contribute to this discussion by providing detailed and regular reports about the impediments on the way forward.

Excellencies,

The situation in temporarily occupied Crimea also demands a constant and special attention by this Council.

Torture and ill-treatment by the Federal Security Service continued to be documented by the UN Mission in the peninsula. In fact, torture has become a tool for fabricating politically motivated trials in Crimea, as proven by the latest detention of Crimean Tatars, including First Deputy Head of Mejlis Nariman Dzhelyal. Another 61-old political prisoner Servet Gaziev was heavily beaten and humiliated with his

beard shaved in Rostov-on-Don, in spite of his dire state of health after the micro stroke he sustained earlier.

In violation of its obligations under IHL to take all necessary measure to curb the COVID spread, Russia continues military indoctrination of Crimean children by organizing a three-day war-historical festival in Sevastopol last weekend.

The Crimean peninsula and adjacent Ukrainian territorial waters have long ago become a testing ground for never ending war exercising by the Russian occupation forces.

Only in a week since our last PC meeting, Russia conducted a number of military drills there. One of them included firing training of submarines “Velikiy Novgorod” and “Stariy Oskol”, on the other day missile cruiser “Moscow” and guard ship “Ladniy” carried out artillery firings. Also, Russia conducted illegal redeployment of its personnel and military equipment from Krasnodar Krai to the firing range “Opuk”, a natural reserve in temporarily occupied Crimea, for a three-day tactical exercise.

We have informed participating States on numerous occasions how the Russian occupation authorities illegally downgraded the status of 40 unique natural resources of Crimea while conducting their military exercises in these areas.

Russia’s intensive militarization of Crimea has already led to serious environmental degradation in the region and it will continue to affect seriously our environmental security for many years to come, including the loss of biodiversity, species extinction, illegal wildlife trafficking, natural resource smuggling, logging have been occurring in the occupied area for more than seven years already. This also exposes a clear link between security and environmental protection.

Let me conclude with a quote of President Zelenskyy, who addressed the UN General Assembly last week, by saying the following: “Mr. President of the 76th Assembly spoke a lot about climate change and the protection of the environment and nature on the planet. In this context, Crimea needs even more UN’s attention. They made a military base out of unique nature. Instead of fauna and flora there is a fleet and soldiers. And in the souls of the Crimean people, there is a problem opposite to the world – not global warming, but global devastation”. So, Crimea needs not only UN’s attention but ours as well.

We urge the Russian Federation to stop its aggression against Ukraine, reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea, de-occupy parts of Donbas, and restore freedom of navigation in the Black Sea, through the Kerch Strait and in the Sea of Azov. Russia must fully implement its commitments under the Minsk agreements, including the withdrawal of its armed forces, mercenaries, armed formations, and weapons from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.