



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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Three years of Russia's attempted annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)

As for delivery by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1137th meeting of the Permanent Council,
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Mr. Chairman,

Three years ago the Russian Federation orchestrated the so-called “referendum” in Ukraine’s Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which were few weeks earlier illegally occupied by the Russian military forces. We will remind that on 20 February 2014 the Russian authorities enacted the plans of an armed aggression against Ukraine and in the night from 26 to 27 February 2014 the units of the Russian special forces seized the building of the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. The so-called “little green men”, in full military gear and heavily armed, blocked the Ukrainian military compounds, Ukrainian Navy and boarder guard bases and check-points, administrative buildings and infrastructure, lined up the streets across the peninsula. Russia used its military units stationed in the Crimean peninsula and sent additional troops into Crimea by air and by sea. Ukrainian vessels were blocked to prevent their exit into the open sea. Later a decree of the President of the Russian Federation established 27 February as the day of Forces of special operations.

This illegal “plebiscite” violated the Ukrainian legislation, international norms and fell short of democratic standards, established by the OSCE and the Council of Europe. It was organised under the barrels of Russian guns.

On March 18, 2014, under the cover of this farce, Moscow attempted annexation of the illegally occupied part of Ukraine’s territory. It is the first time in Europe’s history since the end of the World War II that such an attempt was made, thus underscoring the gravity of Russia’s attack on the rule-based security order.

All ten principles of the Helsinki Final Act - the very foundation of this Organization - have been grossly violated by the Russian Federation, in particular the principle of sovereign equality and respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty; refraining from the threat or use of force; inviolability of frontiers; territorial integrity of states; peaceful settlement of disputes; non-intervention in internal affairs; fulfilment in good faith of obligations in international law. The glaring violations against Ukraine were committed by the state which in 1994 had provided security

guarantees to Ukraine, in particular concerning respect for existing borders, in connection with Ukraine's renouncement of its nuclear weapons.

On 14 November 2016, International Criminal Court issued its preliminary examination of the situation stating that with regard to Crimea and Sevastopol it amounts to international armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation and an on-going state of occupation by Russia of these territories of Ukraine.

International law prohibits the acquisition of part or all of another state's territory through coercion or force. The Delegation of Ukraine reiterates that the Russian Federation's acquisition by force of parts of the territory of Ukraine is legally null and void. Ukraine denies any sovereignty of the Russian Federation over parts of its territory, which remain under Russia's illegal occupation.

Distinguished colleagues,

The Russian occupation authorities in the Crimea resorted to systemic violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, affecting mostly, but not only, the Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian communities. Last week we brought to the attention of the Permanent Council in more detail the dire human rights situation on the peninsula and the atmosphere of impunity that accompanied violations and exacerbated the intimidation of the population. The illegal occupation of Crimea also had large-scale economic consequences for Ukraine in view of the seizure of state and private assets, businesses and natural resources by Russia.

Mr. Chairman,

We highly value the united and resolute position of the OSCE and broader international community in firmly supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders, including by adopting the UN General Assembly Resolutions "Territorial integrity of Ukraine" on 27 March 2014 and "Situation of human rights in Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)" on 19 December 2016.

Russia's illegal actions have been strongly condemned by the overwhelming majority of states, including in the OSCE Permanent Council, and international organisations and their institutions, including Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe. Russia has been consistently called to put an end to human rights violations, to exercise the responsibility as an occupying power under international law and to withdraw from the Ukrainian territory. The challenge that we continue to face is that Russia continues to ignore the international law and the respective position of the international community.

As Russia remains in clear, gross and uncorrected violation of the OSCE principles and commitments, it is critically important not only to show persistence, but also to act accordingly in seeking restoration of respect to these principles and commitments and de-occupation of the Crimean peninsula. We encourage the OSCE Chairmanship and the OSCE Institutions to be seized of the developments in the

occupied Crimea and use all instruments at the disposal of the Organisation for effective responses.

We reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to halt its aggression against Ukraine, to reverse the illegal occupation of the Crimean peninsula, which is an integral part of Ukraine, and to abide fully by its international obligations and commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.