



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

**Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine**  
**at the 959<sup>th</sup> FSC Plenary Meeting on Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine**  
**and illegal occupation of Crimea**  
(4 November 2020, Vienna, via video conferencing)  
(Agenda item 2, General Statements)

**Madam Chairperson,**

Before I begin my statement, I would like to express our sincere condolences to the families of the victims of terror attacks in Austria and France and of the earthquakes which took place in Turkey and Greece.

On behalf of the Delegation of Ukraine let me deliver a statement on the **subject of "Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea"**.

During the period from **19 October through 1 November** the armed formations of the Russian Federation resorted to armed provocations, opened targeted fire and committed other violations of the additional measures to consolidate the ceasefire regime agreed at the TCG meeting on 22 July 2020. They **violated ceasefire regime on 43 occasions** (near Luhanske, Svitlodarsk, Maiorsk, Avdiivka, Lebedynske, Shumy, Novoluhanske, Kamianka, Vodiane, Mariinka, Shyrokyne, Pisky, Novhorodske, Novomykhailivka, Starohnativka, Zaitseve in the Donetsk region and Artema, Katerynivka in the Luhansk region), directing fire against the positions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, with the use of different grenade launchers, heavy machine guns and small arms. The Russian armed formations dropped VOG shells from a drone near Zolote-4, which led to multiple injuries of a Ukrainian serviceman.

The security situation in the conflict area in Donbas **escalated on the 29th and 30th of October** following **deliberate attacks of the Russian armed formations** from the temporarily occupied residential area of Uzhivka on the positions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine near the residential area of Vodiane. Two Ukrainian servicemen were killed and one was injured. It was a clear case of a targeted fire with the use of grenade launchers and small arms. Most recently, on 3 November, the Russian armed formations again unleashed fire from automatic grenade launcher on the UAF positions near Novoluhansk, which led to one Ukrainian serviceman being seriously wounded. We regard such actions as a calculated attempt by Russia and its forces to derail the TCG agreement, reached on 22 July. The Ukrainian side immediately initiated the extraordinary TCG meetings in both cases to stop the shelling and restore the ceasefire regime. This information was also communicated to the SMM.

Please allow me to share my screen for a short **PRESENTATION** on the cease fire violations and the use of UAVs by Russian occupation forces in Donbas. The full version of our presentation will be distributed shortly.

On multiple occasions, the **Russian armed formations** used the **UAVs, forbidden by the Minsk agreements**, with some of them crossing the line of contact. Such violations were registered near the residential areas of Avdiivka, Pavlopil, Mariinka, Shyrokyne and Vodiane. The UAF had to respond to suppress these activities by electronic warfare means.

The SMM continued observing **weapons in violation of withdrawal lines in the temporarily occupied areas** of Donbas. In total, the Mission reported on 133 (out of 137) of such weapons, as well as 269 (out of 289) weapons outside the designated storage sites. In this regard, we would like to draw your attention to the SMM report on the trends and observations in the conflict area for the period from September to July, published on 20 October. According to these data, the OSCE recorded 421 pieces of weaponry deployed in violation of the withdrawal lines, whereas 91% of all violations of the withdrawal of heavy weapons were recorded on the side of the Russian armed formations in Donbas.

The SMM freedom of movement and its assets continued to be severely restricted by the Russian armed formations.

**On 29 October another so-called “humanitarian convoy” of the Russian Federation breached the Ukrainian-Russian state border**, violating the norms of international law, Ukraine’s legislation and modalities for delivery of humanitarian assistance agreed with the ICRC. The shipment was not inspected by Ukrainian border guards and customs officers according to national, bilateral and international regulations. It was repeatedly reported that among the “humanitarian cargoes” there were those not of a humanitarian but of a military nature. We once again condemn Russia’s practice of sending so-called "humanitarian convoys" and urge Russia to respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and inviolability of its frontiers.

Deliberate attacks on the Ukrainian positions on 29-30 October and further armed provocations along with ongoing concentration of heavy weapons near the contact line, severe restrictions of the SMM freedom of movement and interference with its assets carried out by the Russian armed formations as well as illicit transfers of weapons and ammunition by Russia through its so called “humanitarian convoys” are clear indicators of reluctance of the Russian side to proceed further to genuine peaceful resolution of the conflict it started and continues to sustain.

Notwithstanding the challenging circumstances, Ukraine has been proactively restoring civilian infrastructure, improving living conditions and carrying out demining in the conflict-affected areas under Government control, with the SMM observing the adherence to localised ceasefires. We are grateful to the Mission for its dedicated and restless work on this track.

#### **Distinguished colleagues,**

We have been drawing your attention to the **ongoing mounting militarization by Russia of the temporarily occupied Crimea and parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov**, including during a dedicated security dialogue held under our Chairpersonship on 27 May. This aggressive policy has not changed and continues to affect the security of our region.

Since the very start of the illegal occupation of the Peninsula in 2014, Russia has launched large-scale militarization both on the ground and in the sea. The occupying power has been carrying out destabilizing transfers of military equipment, including nuclear capable aircraft, ships and missiles, weapons, ammunition and military personnel there.

Multiple military exercises conducted by the Russian armed forces in and around Crimea reflect Russia's aggressive military posture towards Ukraine and other Black Sea littoral states.

By using the temporarily occupied peninsula as the main logistical base for the Russian military operations, not only in the Black Sea region, but in the entire Mediterranean basin, Russia continues to endanger security of South Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa.

Illegal conscription to the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation is regularly conducted. Overall, over 25 000 Crimean residents have been subjected to the draft over the last six years. As a result of active militarization of Crimea, the local population is being replaced by the citizens of the Russian Federation, mainly members of the Russian army and security forces, who have been resettled from the regions of Russia. Well over 170 000 Russian citizens were resettled to the occupied Crimea since 2014.

The Sea of Azov has been also heavily militarized with a significant increase in the number of warships and a drastic expansion of their area of operation to the whole basin. This progressive militarization has implications for the maritime trade and supplies into Ukraine, including through the impediment of freedom of navigation, poses additional military threat to my country and leads to escalation of security situation in the region.

The illegal construction of the Kerch Strait Bridge between Russia and the temporarily occupied Crimea has substantially contributed to this threat, in particular by facilitating further militarization of Crimea and deployment of additional Russian maritime and other forces to this area under the pretext of protection of the bridge and its infrastructure.

The aggressive actions of the Russian Federation in the Kerch Strait on 25 November 2018, when Ukrainian vessels were blocked from entering the Sea of Azov and subsequently attacked and captured by the Russian warships under the artificial pretext of "violation of Russian borders", proved yet again the urgency of the problem of militarization of Crimea and parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.

Given the volatile security situation in the areas concerned and its far-reaching negative implications, the UNGA at its 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> sessions adopted the resolutions 73/194 and 74/17 "Problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov", in which it, *inter alia*, calls on Russia to immediately withdraw its armed forces from Crimea and stop the temporary occupation of Ukraine's territories. The consolidated position of the OSCE participating States was also made clear in 2019 in a respective Parliamentary Assembly resolution (*"On the Militarization by the Russian Federation of the Temporarily Occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov"*).

It should be also emphasized that after the occupation of Crimea, Russia turned the Peninsula into a grey zone inaccessible for verification activities under the CFE, Open Skies Treaty and

the Vienna Document 2011. This state of affairs continues to erode military transparency, predictability and trust in the region.

The militarization of Crimea has already had serious implications for the environment, notably through the construction of the Kerch Strait Bridge, contamination by Russia's Armed Forces of the soil and groundwater with heavy metals, fuel, lubricants, chemicals, and stationing of military bases on the territories of nature reserves and parks. Moreover, the unlawful extension of the Russian military presence in Crimea is one of the reasons for a lack of drinking water for the residents of the peninsula. As a result, the occupational authorities drill additional water wells, which will cause irreparable damage to the environment.

In light of the continuing deteriorating security and environmental situation in the Azov and the Black Sea region, caused by Russia's irresponsible behaviour, Ukraine and its international partners submitted to the **UN GA 75<sup>th</sup> session the draft resolution «Problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov»**. We appeal to the participating States to support adoption of this important document.

**In conclusion**, we urge the Russian Federation to stop its aggression against Ukraine, reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea, de-occupy parts of the 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 withdrawal of its forces, illegal armed formations and weapons from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.  
**Thank you, Madam Chairperson.**