



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 1312nd meeting of the Permanent Council
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Madam Chairperson,

We are grateful to all participating States, who expressed their support to Ukraine in the last few weeks, when Russia has significantly increased its military presence along the border with my country and in the temporarily occupied parts. Russia's further moves could not be predicted. In the past, it has already demonstrated its readiness to attack all of a sudden, when it had such opportunity. The consolidated stance of the international community with clear messages delivered has been crucial to prevent such developments in this case.

As reiterated by many delegations in the last PC meeting, we need to continue closely monitoring the security situation. We should not loose vigilance neither in Donbas, nor in Crimea, nor in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, which remain heavily militarized by Russia. Half a million Russian passports, which have already been illegally issued by the Russian side in the occupied parts of Donbas, can easily be used by Russia as a pretext for initiating another armed attack. We have already witnessed a number of such statements by the Russian officials.

Ukraine's resolve to proceed with diplomatic resolution of the conflict is beyond question. We remain committed to the existing negotiation and consultation mechanisms, which offer a way forward, and we are ready to engage additional instruments, if they prove useful to that end. We, however, reject the Kremlin's attempts to engage us into a so-called "direct dialogue" with its occupation administrations in Donbas, which would allow Russia to manipulate the process and escape its responsibility as a party to the conflict. The key to conflict resolution remains in Moscow, not in Donetsk or Luhansk, where the members of the Russian occupation administrations simply fulfil instructions coming from the Russian leadership.

Russia is the aggressor state and party to the conflict in Donbas – not a mediator.

It is regrettable that the Russian side links establishment of a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire in Donbas to fulfilment of its ungrounded demands, such as direct cooperation with its illegal armed formations. It urges them to continue fire and shelling until Kremlin's blackmailing achieves its goal. In 9 months since July 2020, those armed formations did not stop their attacks. We have counted almost 1400 ceasefire violations including 246 cases of use of the Minsk-proscribed weapons, 67 cases of the use of UAVs, 34 cases of remote mining and 16 shelling of the residential areas. Many of these data are corroborated by the SMM, although the Mission's ability to monitor the security situation remains severely undermined by Russia-imposed restrictions. 34 Ukrainian servicemen have been killed and more than a hundred wounded since 27 July 2020. This is the price for our efforts to maintain ceasefire and keep the lives of civilians safer.

Yesterday's weekly report by the SMM informs of a 40 per cent decrease in the level of armed violence, constituting the second consecutive week when the number of observed ceasefire violations along the contact line decreased. On certain days, this

number was close to zero. This demonstrates that commitment to the ceasefire is a matter of political will, but not the necessity. The number of the Minsk-proscribed weapons and those outside designated storage sites has also significantly decreased in comparison with the last week. We urge the Russian side to ensure comprehensive commitment to the ceasefire and facilitate progress on the political track of the Minsk agreements.

Ceasefire is urgently needed for people living in the conflict-affected areas. On 4 May, a central district hospital was shelled by the Russian armed formations in Krasnohorivka. Explosions damaged the building and left it without electricity. The patients, including those seriously ill and undergoing COVID treatment, had to be evacuated. Such cases are totally unacceptable.

The Russian side must also fulfil at last its long overdue commitment to open additional checkpoints near Zolote and Shchastia, and to lift all excessive restrictions in the existing ones. We thank the SMM for providing detailed reports on the challenges faced in this regard by civilians, who are left without the possibility to visit their families or receive administrative services in the government-controlled areas. Even in the open checkpoints, the Russian armed formations with armbands of the so-called “customs” impose ridiculous restrictions, such as the ban to bring cat food bought by a man in the government-controlled areas. Russia has already brought too much suffering to Ukrainian citizens by its armed aggression and temporary occupation. It must refrain from causing additional difficulties, in particular to civilians.

We share concerns raised by vast majority of participating States on the SMM freedom of movement. The Mission’s work remains essential for increasing transparency, military predictability and security on the ground. The SMM reports, for instance, prove the ongoing illegal supplies provided by Russia through Chervona Mohyla railway station in Voznesenivka, in which the Russian armed formations regularly force the SMM monitors observing cargo railway cars to leave. The SMM UAVs are deliberately prevented by Russian armed formations from fulfilling their tasks, as was the case in the occupied Oleksandrivka when the SMM patrol was ordered not to launch the UAV or it would be shot down. We join the calls by the OSCE community on Russia to stop such behaviour.

In the Crimea-related part of my statement today, I wish to focus on the freedom of media in the Crimean peninsula, temporarily occupied by Russia.

On 3 May, we marked the World Press Freedom Day, which serves as a reminder of the dire situation in this field in Crimea. The Russian occupation administration has squeezed all Ukrainian media, be it TV, radio or printed media, out of the peninsula. Dozens of Ukrainian popular websites are blocked in Crimea, as reported by the NGO “Crimean Human Rights Group”. The Russian radio channels broadcast their programs on Ukrainian radio frequencies, preventing them from reaching their destination in Crimea.

Civil and freelance journalists continue to be persecuted. We have already drawn attention to the case of Vladyslav Yesypenko. Recently, his illegal detention was extended until 11 July. We reiterate our call to immediately release him and other political prisoners.

On 20 April, the editor-in-chief of the Qirim newspaper was fined for quoting the UN Secretary General Report mentioning the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people. In Russia’s view, that publication was a violation of the Russian law, which requires labelling the Mejlis as an extremist organization. I would again remind that the UN International Court of Justice ordered to revoke this Russia’s decision on the Mejlis back in April 2017. This remains an absurd situation, in which a permanent member of the UN Security Council is so persistent in undermining the UN.

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

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.