



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 1295th meeting of the Permanent Council
10 December 2020

Mr. Chairperson,

Yesterday marked one year since the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany met in Paris to discuss the ways of resolving the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict and restoring peace in Donbas. The parties to the conflict, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, undertook a number of commitments to stabilize the security situation on the ground and to implement the political provisions of the Minsk agreements. We thank Germany and France for their continued mediation efforts to facilitate settlement of the conflict and to bring an end to the gravest security challenge in the OSCE area. Despite Russia's persistent attempts to diminish the role of the Normandy format, which we all observed in particular at the negotiations in the run up to the 27th OSCE Ministerial Council, this format remains the primary platform for political level decisions, which are to be complemented by the practical measures agreed at the consultations within the Trilateral Contact Group.

Fulfilment of the Paris Common Agreed Conclusions brought tangible results. Additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire adopted in July 2020 have drastically reduced the number of ceasefire violations, civilian and military casualties, and damage to critical infrastructure in Donbas. In December 2019 and April 2020, two stages of the mutual release of the conflict-related detainees took place.

Regretfully, further implementation of other security and humanitarian provisions of the Agreed Conclusions remains stalled due to the continued obstruction from the Russian side of the constructive work of the TCG on the relevant tracks. The delegation of Ukraine and many other participating States drew attention to these compelling facts in the previous meetings of the Permanent Council. We reiterate our principled position that adoption of an updated demining plan, establishment of new disengagement areas and opening of new entry-exit checkpoints across the contact line should not be linked to any political preconditions. We also remind the Russian side that it has committed to ensure full and unconditional access of the ICRC to the detainees, as well as safe and secure access of the SMM in the occupied parts of Donbas.

For our part, we are ready to move forward in fulfilling the political part of the Paris Summit Common Agreed Conclusions of 9 December 2019. To this end the Ukrainian delegation to the TCG presented its working proposals for

consideration of all participants. As no common understanding was found on the mechanisms of their implementation, the Ukrainian side took the decision to extend the term of applicability of the “Law on the peculiarities of local self-government in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions” for another year, till the end of 2021. The respective draft of the law was submitted to the Ukrainian Parliament on 7 December.

Let me underscore that solutions to many practical issues can be found as soon as the Russian side ceases its futile efforts pretending not being involved in the conflict as a party to it, and makes practical steps aimed at restoration of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

As of now, this is not the case. The Russian delegation was the only one, which blocked forwarding the draft of the OSCE MC Declaration on the OSCE’s efforts towards peaceful settlement with respect to Ukraine for consideration of the Preparatory Committee. This isolated position indicates that Russia’s views on the conflict and the ways to resolve it are supported by none of the participating States.

The developments on the ground in Donbas also prove that the Russian leadership has not yet taken the decision to cease the armed hostilities. As we informed earlier, the military provocations by the Russian armed formations continue on a regular basis. In four months since the start of ceasefire on 27 July, those provocations left four Ukrainian servicemen dead and 15 wounded. In the same period, we registered 339 ceasefire violations, including 14 cases of use of Minsk proscribed weapons, 38 cases of use of UAVs, 23 cases of additional engineering of positions and one case of position’s change by the Russian armed formations.

The most recent SMM weekly report of 8 December informs about further deterioration of the security situation along the line of contact, with a twofold increase of ceasefire violations and more than a threefold increase in the number of explosions. On 28 November, an SMM long-range UAV spotted an electronic warfare system (R-330Zh Zhitel) near Kovske, about 5km from the border with the Russian Federation. I would remind that “Zhitel” is one of the numerous modern Russian weapon systems, regularly spotted by the SMM in the parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, temporarily occupied by Russia. The Ukrainian militaries report on the recent use of 122mm artillery, guided anti-tank missiles and remote planting of anti-personnel mines by the Russian armed formations.

We urge the Russian side to reverse this negative trend on the ground, to instruct its illegal armed formations to return to the ceasefire, and to unblock substantive, result-oriented discussions within the TCG.

Mr. Chairperson,

Today, as we celebrate the Human Rights Day, we wish to recall the dire situation with observance of human rights in the parts of Ukraine’s territory, occupied by Russia. The local population remains vulnerable to arbitrary illegal actions, deprivation of liberty, tortures, violation of property rights, forced conscription and imposition of the foreign citizenship, persecution of dissenting voices and violation of the fundamental freedoms. The Russian occupation administrations continue to block access of international human rights missions and NGOs, preventing them to reflect these violations in their reports.

The ongoing militarization of the occupied territories of Ukraine remains no less critical. The fast transformation of the Crimean peninsula into a huge military

outpost of Russia in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov is the most serious security threat to the entire region. On 7 December, the 75th session of the UN GA adopted the respective Resolution, for the third year in a row. The updated document contains a number of new key elements, including related to the international verification and arms control regimes: the Treaty on Open Skies, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the Vienna Document 2011. We thank all participating States, who co-sponsored this Resolution and supported it during the voting.

We also express our gratitude to the participating States, who took part in the side-event "International Response to the Occupation of Crimea: Next Steps", held by Ukraine and co-sponsors in the framework of the 27th OSCE MC Meeting. We need to carefully consider the ideas and proposals raised by the Ministers and Heads of delegation at this event, on the OSCE engagement into the work of the Crimean Platform, and to deliver them in practice at the level of delegations to the OSCE.

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, Mr. Chairperson.