



**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 1321<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council  
24 June 2021

**Madam Chairperson,**

Last Monday, on 21 June, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov during his press-conference with OSCE Secretary General Helga Schmid called the OSCE SMM to register in a clear and impartial way the ceasefire violations in Donbas and specify the guilty party for casualties among civilians.

It seems the Russian side doesn't follow the SMM reports closely enough. Otherwise, it would know the answer to its question on the guilty party. A couple of days before that press-conference, on 16 June, the SMM recorded 15 outgoing explosions of artillery rounds near the centre of Donetsk city, which were fired from the weapons that should have been withdrawn according to the Minsk agreements.

Let me say it again: the Russian armed formations moved the Minsk-proscribed heavy weapons to the centre of the city with 1 million inhabitants and made 15 rounds from it. This is the tactic, which we have been observing since the very beginning of Russia's hybrid armed invasion into Ukraine, when the civilian population is used as a human shield, while Russian propaganda media disseminates fakes about Ukrainian servicemen.

Foreign Minister Lavrov has also called for enhanced effectiveness of the SMM. This task could be easily achieved whenever the Russian side takes the decision to allow the Mission to implement its mandate without the restrictions and impediments imposed by Russia.

The Russian side could lift for instance the restrictions on crossings across the line of contact and between the temporarily occupied parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which until now force the SMM to act as three separate operational entities.

Or, the Russian side could stop supplying modern jamming stations, recorded by the SMM in the Russia-occupied territories. Last week, the SMM experienced 54 instances of jamming and probable jamming during 30 of 80 flights. It would be useful also for the SMM monitoring if the Russian armed formations stop restricting the SMM freedom of movement on the ground and allow the Mission's patrols to do their job.

It is very cynical on the side of the Russian delegation to deliver, week by week, the fake narratives on the so-called Ukraine's responsibility for non-

implementation of the Minsk agreements. Is it Ukraine that has occupied parts of Russia's territory? Is it Ukraine that sends mercenaries, weapons, ammunition, anti-personnel mines and Russian "Orlan-10" UAVs to the line of contact? Or is it Ukraine that illegally issues hundreds of thousands of its passports to the Russian citizens, flagrantly undermining Russia's sovereignty?

Is it not cynical that Russia refused yesterday in the TCG – once again, as it did continuously since August 2020 – to support a decision on 19 demining zones, despite yet another clear agreement reached in the Working Group on Security Issues on Tuesday to submit the issue to the Trilateral Working Group for finalization? And despite the unambiguous nature of the relevant provisions in the Common Agreed Conclusions of the Normandie Summit of 9 December 2019 relating to demining.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has been ongoing for more than seven years as of now. There is no need to explain who are the parties to it and who launched and continues to fuel it. Russia's strategy of hiding behind the backs of its puppets does not work. The sanctions imposed by the international community are the best confirmation of this fact.

We urge the Russian side to abandon its aggressive behaviour and start improving the security situation on the ground. Last week, the SMM recorded almost two thousand ceasefire violations, a 265 per cent increase compared to the previous week, almost half of which was assessed as live-fire exercises in the occupied part of Luhansk region.

In the same territory, the Mission has also spotted various posters inviting men and women to join the Russian armed formations, with promises of monetary remuneration and assistance in obtaining Russian passports. We thank the SMM for responding to our calls to verify the reported conscription of local residents to the Russian occupier forces. We again remind the Russian side that the forceful military conscription in the occupied territories represents a direct violation of international humanitarian law.

We urge the Russian side to stop using local population as hostages. Civilians must be able to move freely, including across the line of contact, but must not be drafted to the Russian armed formations or sent behind bars of illegal prisons for refusing to do that.

Starting from 17 June, as confirmed by the SMM, civilians are no longer required to prove that they have the "Act at Home" application installed on their smartphone, nor show negative COVID-19 test results when travelling towards government-controlled areas, in line with the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine following a decrease in the spread of pandemic. It is high time for the Russian occupier forces in Donbas to act likewise by opening all EECs, including the new ones at Zolote and Shchastia.

As stressed earlier by the delegation of Ukraine, until Russia ends its aggression against Ukraine, it must mitigate impact of the conflict on local population.

This impact remains severe, as widely reflected in the most recent report by the UN Secretary General on situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, which was submitted to the UN Human Rights Council this week. This report includes a number of specific calls to Russia to uphold its obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law in Crimea, in particular on ensuring the rights of detainees, respecting fundamental freedoms, enabling a

safe environment for independent and pluralistic media outlets, civil society organizations and religious groups, lifting restrictions imposed on the Crimean Tatar community, ensuring the availability of education in the Ukrainian language, ending the conscription of protected persons and many others, which we regularly raise in the PC meetings.

On the eve of International Day in Support of Victims of Torture to be marked on 26 June, I would reiterate the UN SG call to Russia to comply fully with the absolute prohibition of torture and ensure the independent, impartial and effective investigation of all allegations of ill-treatment, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention in Crimea. As stressed by delegations in the last PC meeting, the problem of illegal detentions and tortures is present also in the occupied parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. This practice must be immediately stopped by the Russian side.

Security and humanitarian situation on the ground could also be considerably improved if the Russian side withdrew its forces from the border with Ukraine and temporarily occupied Crimean peninsula and parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Or, it could at least fulfil its OSCE commitments on military transparency and confidence building measures.

Yesterday, on 23 June at the 980<sup>th</sup> FSC Plenary Meeting, the delegation of Ukraine has voluntarily informed participating States in advance on the planned military naval exercise "Sea Breeze - 2021", a combined multinational military naval exercise involving 32 countries. We are transparent in our intentions and pose no military threat for the Russian Federation. I wish we could say the same about Russia's position towards Ukraine.

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.**