



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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**Statement on “Russia’s on-going aggression against Ukraine
and illegal occupation of Crimea”**

As for delivery by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1139th meeting of the Permanent Council,
30 March 2017

Mr. Chairman,

This Monday, on 27 March 2017, three years have passed since the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Resolution “Territorial Integrity of Ukraine” (68/262), whereby the UN Member States affirmed their commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and called upon all States to desist and refrain from actions aimed at disrupting the national unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

The defiance by the Russian Federation of this Resolution, as well as of numerous persistent appeals of the international community to return to the tenets of the international law and reverse Russia’s illegal actions continues to pose a serious threat to the European security, aggravated by Russia’s military intervention in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

Distinguished colleagues,

The security situation in Donbas remains highly volatile and unstable. Despite the decisions taken earlier within the Trilateral Contact Group and Normandy format on establishment of a comprehensive ceasefire, the hybrid Russian forces keep firing at the Ukrainian Armed Forces and civilians living along the contact line. In the week between 21 and 27 March, the daily average of these deadly attacks reached the rate of 80, with nearly half carried out from the Minsk proscribed heavy artillery. Only on one day of 25 March, the illegal armed formations fired 77 mortar rounds of 120mm caliber, 93 mortar rounds of 82mm and 6 tank shells. Yesterday the power supply to Avdiivka and the Donetsk water filtration station was again disrupted by shelling.

As a result of Russia’s ongoing aggression in Donbas, only in the last week of 21–27 March, Ukraine’s combat death toll was 8 servicemen killed and 27 wounded.

These military offensives and artillery and mortar attacks continue to be sustained by constant flow of Russian weaponry and ammunition through the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. This March, another 8 armoured vehicles, 10 trucks with munitions, 4 radio-electronic warfare (jamming)

stations, 60 railway tank cars with fuel, and 20 platforms with heavy weapons (including self-propelled howitzers) have been brought by Russia into Donbas. This weaponry further increased the amount of Russian heavy weapons already present in Donbas. Only in the last two months the Ukrainian competent authorities registered 670 pieces of these weapons (156 MLRS “Grad”, including 2 Russian MLRS “Uragan”, 164 tanks, 167 self-propelled artillery guns, 143 towed artillery and 40 mortars).

While the Russian representatives, participating in the hearings of the International Court of Justice in the Hague, cling to Russian myths of heavy artillery excavated from the coal mines, the OSCE SMM continues to report about Russian weaponry and equipment that has never been on the inventory of the Ukrainian military.

The SMM report of 27 March informed about 30 outgoing individual MLRS rockets fired on 26 March from non-government controlled Yasynuvata. As confirmed by the Ukrainian Armed Forces, those shellings from Yasynuvata were fired from “Grad-P” weapon system and targeted the residential areas of Avdiivka. The next day the SMM reported about the monitors’ visits to two impact sites in Avdiivka, one in Belinskoho street and another in Ostrovskoho street, targeted by MRLS single rounds. It is the same Russian “Grad-P” with individual MLRS rockets, to which I have repeatedly drawn the attention of the Permanent Council in our previous meetings after the use of this weapon by the hybrid Russian forces.

We urge the Russian Federation to immediately proceed to full observance of the security provisions of the Minsk agreements, to withdraw its hybrid armed formations and military equipment from the territory of Ukraine, to stop the supplies of new manpower and weapons to Donbas, and to allow for the OSCE permanent monitoring and verification on the Ukrainian-Russian state border at the segment currently out of control of the Government of Ukraine.

We welcome the yesterday’s announcement by the Trilateral Contact Group, consisting of Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE as the mediator, on renewal of commitment to comprehensive cease-fire from 1 April 2017. As before, observance of undertaken security commitments remains of critical importance.

Mr. Chairman,

The hybrid Russian forces continuously resort to indiscriminate shellings to sow terror among the population. In particular, it found additional confirmation in the SMM report of 24 March, citing the residents of government-controlled Zaitseve 62km north-east of Donetsk, who said they were unaware of any military positions in the vicinity of the place, where the SMM monitors registered shrapnel and the damage caused by 152mm artillery round.

While being fully aware of the disastrous humanitarian consequences of their shellings and flagrant violation of the Minsk agreements, the hybrid Russian forces continue to obstruct and intimidate the SMM monitors, preventing them from fulfilling their mandate on objective monitoring of the situation on the ground. Only in the last few days the SMM again reported on a number of such incidents. In particular, on 24 March the SMM patrol of four mission members was forced to leave

the area near non-government controlled Znamianka (36km north-west of Luhansk) under the false pretext of mortar fire, while a fighter of the illegal armed formation shot into the air near the monitors. On 28 March near non-government controlled Kozatske (36km north-east of Mariupol) fighters of the illegal armed formation stopped the SMM patrol, fired several shots from assault rifle (AK-47) into the air and toward the ground near the monitors, and another four shots and one burst of small-arms fire while the monitors were leaving. We consider these incidents of endangering the civilian monitors of the mission, which was approved also by the Russian Federation, as utterly unacceptable and condemn them in strongest terms. We urge Russia to exercise responsibility in putting an immediate end to such assaults and take the perpetrators to account. The rapidly increasing number of these worrying security incidents, accompanied by hostile information campaign against the SMM in the areas controlled by the hybrid Russian forces, deserve a focused attention of a special Permanent Council meeting.

Distinguished colleagues,

The plight of the civilian population in the conflict affected areas of Donbas, inflicted by Russia, is further aggravated by the persistent unwillingness of the Russian side to facilitate the movement of civilians across the contact line.

Since March 2016, Russia continuously blocks all Ukraine's initiatives to open Zolote entry-exit checkpoint. This checkpoint would substantially ease the pressure on thousands of people in Stanytsia Luhanska, the only crossing point in the Luhansk region. Apart from the hardships of hours-long waiting, the long queues add to the security risks for the civilians, as the illegal armed formations persist in their shelling of the area, with the latest registered on 26 March.

We urge the Russian side to unblock the opening of Zolote checkpoint and to cease fire on a sustainable basis in Stanytsia Luhanska as the agreed precondition of proceeding to the disengagement of forces.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian authorities took a decision to extend by one hour the time of operation of crossing points. The authorities continue to provide maximum possible assistance to nearly 1.7 mln. IDPs, who became the victims of the Russian aggression against the territorial integrity of Ukraine. On 23 March, the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine adopted two laws, which address pertinent issues relating to supply of utilities to the IDPs living in temporary dwellings and simplify the procedure of registration of IDPs in government-controlled areas.

Mr. Chairman,

We continue to confront the facts that not only Russia does not honour its commitments under the Minsk agreements, it persists in its aggression against Ukraine. In doing so Russia uses a variety of military, political, economic, information and subversive instruments, including support of terrorism. The Russian authorities continue to indulge in falsifications and do not refrain from their most absurd forms, as exemplified by a show court ruling in Russia this week on conviction in absentia of the Ukrainian politician, former Prime Minister Arseniy

Yatsenyuk. It is yet another evidence of the degradation of the Russian state system which transformed the judiciary into a government-controlled instrument of legal justification of Russian aggression against Ukraine, including through persecution of Ukraine's political figures and ordinary Ukrainians, dozens of whom are in illegal detention in Russian prisons.

Ukraine will stay resolved in defence of its people, its sovereignty and territorial integrity within the internationally recognized borders, and will continue to use all available legal instruments to take Russia to account for its illegal actions.

On 27 March, the International Chamber of Commerce in Paris started the hearings on the case of the Oschadbank of Ukraine against the Russian Federation concerning the destruction of the bank's investments in Crimea after the illegal occupation of the peninsula by Russia. This case reminds us of the heavy economic and financial losses the Russian hybrid warfare brought to Ukraine. This week, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine released the estimates on export losses of Ukraine in the last two years as a result of Russia's illegal occupation of Crimea and Russia's intervention into Donbas. They amount to 12.9 bln USD.

It remains critically important to maintain and step up international pressure on Russia to make this country stop its aggression against Ukraine and implement its international commitments and obligations.

We again urge the Russian Federation to return to the tenets of international law and reverse the illegal occupation of the Crimean peninsula which is an integral part of Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.