



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

**Statement in response to Ambassador Gyorgy Varga,
Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission
at two Russian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border**

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1303rd meeting of the Permanent Council
18 February 2021

Madam Chairperson,

The delegation of Ukraine warmly welcomes Ambassador Gyorgy Varga, Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border, back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for presenting today's report.

We're glad to hear that in spite of all challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic the Mission remained fully staffed, operational and continued to being present 24/7 at the two BCPs.

Ukraine appreciates the Mission's regular reporting on observations at the Russian checkpoints «Gukovo» and «Donetsk». It's difficult to imagine, but having been present at just 2 border crossing points along the temporarily uncontrolled by the Government of Ukraine segment of state border with the Russian Federation out of 11, since its deployment in 2014 the Mission has already reported on the movement of more than 39 thousand people in military-style outfits, 221 thousand trucks and almost 50 thousand cargo vans. Monitors also heard the sounds of more than 6 thousand trains and observed 99 out of 101 so-called «Russian humanitarian convoys», every of which has been sent and delivered to the territory of Ukraine in breach of international law and Russia's commitments as the OSCE participating state.

When we refer to unbelievable in the XXI century method of documentation of trains by BOM's monitors, we immediately recall restrictive conditions, under which the Mission has been operating since the very beginning.

Taking into account this fact, as well as impediments imposed by the Russian occupation administrations on activities of the OSCE SMM to Ukraine especially in the border areas, it turns out that the international community is left with the opportunity to only guess about the real scope of developments on the state border between Russia and Ukraine along the temporarily occupied territories of my country.

Motives of Russia's denial to expand geographic scope of the Mission to enable independent international monitoring on and between all 11 border crossings points along the 409 km segment of the occupied state border of Ukraine are obvious. Moscow is not interested in comprehensive and unbiased monitoring on the border and areas adjacent to it, because relevant reporting would only provide additional facts about Russian military presence in Donbas.

So it was not surprising that last year during preparations for the OSCE Ministerial Council in Tirana, the so called "good will" delegation of the Russian

Federation appeared to be the only participating State which blocked the joint proposal for Ministerial Council Draft Decision “On the OSCE Permanent Monitoring and Verification of the Areas Adjacent to the Ukrainian-Russian State Border Which are Temporarily Not Under Control of the Ukrainian Government”, co-sponsored by 34 participating States. This draft, in line with some provisions related to the SMM, inter alia provided for necessary resources to enhance BOM’s capabilities for effective monitoring, including through the use of technical surveillance equipment, UAVs and satellite imageries. It also encouraged the OSCE Chairpersonship to elaborate proposals on expansion of the BOM operation.

Chief Observer,

Ukraine regrets that that the Mission continues to operate in difficult and restrictive conditions, which drastically complicate the important task of comprehensive monitoring of the Russian-Ukrainian state border. Along with majority of participating States, we call on Russia to support expansion of the geographic scope of the Mission to all 11 BCPs, lift existing restrictions and allow monitors of the Mission to use observation tools, including binoculars, technical surveillance equipment and UAVs. We also urge Russia as a host country to finally create necessary conditions for approval of Mission’s legal status thus securing legal protection of its monitors.

Madame Chairperson, dear colleagues,

Russia’s destructive stance towards monitoring activities of both the BOM and the SMM along the temporarily uncontrolled by the Government of Ukraine segment of the state border between Ukraine and the Russian Federation goes far beyond its reluctance and disinterest in involving in constructive dialogue on the politico-diplomatic track of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict resolution.

Firstly, this is the issue of Russia’s negligence towards its wider commitments under the OSCE Border Security and Management Concept which Russia has taken together with the other participating States by supporting the Ministerial Council Decision N^o2/05 in Ljubljana – the issue which cannot be left without proper attention of the OSCE participating States.

Secondly, paragraph 4 of the Minsk Protocol of 5 September 2014, signed by the sides of the conflict - the Russian Federation and Ukraine with facilitation by the OSCE - envisages permanent monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian state border and verification by the OSCE with the establishment of security zones in the border areas of Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

In this regard Ukraine calls on Russia to follow its own appeals, work with these documents and concentrate on implementing their relevant provisions, instead of telling all of us here time and time again about Russia’s so-called “good will”.

We consider the transparency at the Russian-Ukrainian border as an integral part of the peaceful resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict. Without withdrawal of Russian occupation forces and illegal armed formations from the territory of Ukraine followed by reinstating of full control over the Ukrainian-Russian border by the Government of Ukraine, any substantial progress in peaceful negotiations on the way to comprehensive political resolution of this conflict remains hardly possible.

In conclusion I would like to once again reiterate Ukraine’s full support to the activities of the BOM and thank Ambassador Gyorgy Varga and his able team for their dedicated work under current difficult conditions.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.