



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine in response to the Address by the Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, H.E. Mr. Benedetto Della Vedova

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna, to the 1353rd meeting of the Permanent Council, 03 February 2022

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to join other delegations in expressing a warm welcome to Mr. Benedetto Della Vedova, Undersecretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation of Italy, for being at the Permanent Council today.

Mr. Undersecretary,

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and presenting priorities set by the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Definitely, the existing network between our organizations is relevant more than ever as we are facing with so many common challenges at the same time: from the ongoing and protracted conflicts, which are causing brutal violations of human rights and international law, to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Enhancing women's empowerment and the rights of children and adolescents, promoting youth policies while fighting discrimination, addressing challenges posed to our societies by new technologies, especially in view of growing number of cyber-attacks, protection of cultural heritage, no doubts, deserve our special attention.

At the same time, any suppression of democracy, either it is rooted in the conflict or explained by the pandemic restrictions, directly affects people and undermines stability and security. Unfortunately, the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine face all the challenges, caused by the ongoing foreign aggression and the COVID-19 pandemic.

In view of this, we appreciate the Council of Europe's steadfast position on the unacceptability of the Russian aggressive actions towards Ukraine. Numerous decisions adopted by the Committee of Ministers since 2014, in which the Committee «condemned the illegal annexation by the Russian Federation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol» have set a strong foundation for the non-recognition policy of the Council of Europe.

The principled position of the Council of Europe was especially highlighted by the active participation of Secretary General H.E. Marija Pejčinović Burić's in the Inaugural Summit of the Crimea Platform last year.

The last year adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the decision on "Human rights situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)" also equips the Council of Europe with another important tool

in addressing human rights situation in the temporarily occupied Crimea as well as practically contributes to attracting of additional attention of existing international monitoring mechanisms and institutions to the peninsula.

We welcome the fact that the presentation of the first report by the Secretary General, as foreseen by the abovementioned decision, will take place under the Italian Presidency and count on the support of the Presidency during the consideration of the report in the Committee of Ministers.

We also believe that the future report will provide the Committee with a basis for possible decisions on action according to principles and norms of international law and taking due account of the status of Crimea as a temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine.

Furthermore, we are convinced that the Council of Europe human rights bodies are also relevant to assess the overall human rights situation in the occupied Donbas. The gruesome lawlessness in these territories needs to receive a proper assessment in order we could overcome the occupation consequences in the most effective way in the future.

Keeping a vigilant eye by both – the Council of Europe and OSCE – over the humanitarian situation in the occupied territories would reinforce their residents in their belief that they are not alone in the face of the Russian repressive machinery.

The synergy between Vienna and Strasbourg could make a real difference for the people on the ground. Our organizations have a broad range of capacities as well as strong mandates obtained from their members in order to act properly in preventing and resolving the current crisis in our region.

We also believe that a focus of the Italian Presidency on the faithful implementation of the ECHR's decisions is also as relevant as ever, since the Russian Federation has decided to challenge the supremacy of the Court's decisions, despite a legally binding obligation it has undertaken under the European Convention of Human Rights to fully respect them.

While the Court is considering extremely important cases related to the occupation of Crimea and Donbas, the proper implementation of its verdicts would be crucial for our common efforts aimed at restoring respect for the rule of law, security and human rights in Europe.

And as the last months have clearly demonstrated that Russia has taken a deliberate stance to heighten tension and threaten Ukraine and its people once again with the use of force, it is also a high time to remind Russia of its obligations and commitments it has undertaken upon the accession to the Council of Europe back in 1996.

Namely, not to threaten its neighbors by the use of force but to respect strictly the provision of international humanitarian law as well as not to advocate for the re-creation of zones of influence but to denounce as wrong the concept of two different categories of foreign countries known as "near abroad".

Mr. Undersecretary,

We highly value this cooperation between both organizations, which demonstrates its relevance and necessity to be further reinforced.

In conclusion, we would like to wish you a successful continuation of your Chairmanship and to assure you that Ukraine stands ready to render every possible assistance to Italy as well as to support its activities aimed at promoting Council of Europe's values across the continent.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.