



**Permanent Mission of Ukraine**  
to the International  
Organizations in Vienna

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

As delivered by Ms. Yevheniia Filipenko,  
Deputy Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1185<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
10 May 2018

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Last Monday, the Russian non-governmental sociological research organization “Levada-Center” published the data of the poll conducted last month in Russia, in which the respondents had been asked to name the main successes and failures of President Putin during his third presidential term. The polls showed pride of the Russian citizens with the foreign policy, but frustration over the social-economic situation in the country, which continued to deteriorate. The Russian propaganda machine would not explain the link between the two, but instead Kremlin continues to pursue aggressive expansionist foreign policy for diverting attention from plundering the country’s resources, and the lack of equitable income distribution and rule of law.

Last week we witnessed further deterioration of security and humanitarian situation in Donbas. The Russian armed formations have significantly increased the number and intensity of shellings of Ukrainian military positions and residential areas located along the contact line in Donbas, including the localities of Zaitseve, Maiorsk, and Luhanske. On 5 May, the Hnutove entry-exit checkpoint near Pyshchevyk was shelled by the Russian fighters using antitank guided missiles. At the time nearly one hundred civilians were waiting to cross. All of them, including the personnel of the checkpoint, were evacuated to trench shelters, the crossings were temporarily suspended. The Russian missiles destroyed two civilian vehicles, but, fortunately, didn’t cause any casualties. The SMM patrol, which was present at that time at the entry-exit checkpoint, confirmed “the impacts of antitank guided missiles fired from an east-south-easterly direction”, where the Russian positions are located.

The Ukrainian servicemen operating within the Joint Forces Operation were forced to react to this rapid aggravation of security environment by delivering response fire and providing an active defense in those situations where it was urgently necessary in order to save human lives. The everyday developments prove that it is Russia and its ongoing military activity in the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, which remain the obstacle to the peaceful

resolution of the conflict from its very beginning. As soon as Moscow takes the decision to stop violence, it will end.

Until then, the Joint Forces Operation tasked with ensuring the national security and defense, rebuffing and deterring Russia's armed aggression will continue. Under the command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the mechanism of coordination among the militaries, special services, law-enforcement forces and civil administrations of Ukraine is now improving to ensure better protection for civilian population. In the abovementioned incident at Hnutove entry-exit checkpoint, the "red code" was introduced, which restricts civilian access to the affected area to save their lives from the Russian weapons. A series of other measures is planned for the near future, including establishment of mobile police posts in this area to enhance the security of local population.

**Distinguished colleagues,**

Every week, the safety and security of SMM monitors remains in the focus of our discussions in the Permanent Council. We remind the Russian delegation of its responsibility as a party to the conflict to ensure safe and secure access of the civilian unarmed monitors to the territories it occupies in Donbas. There is no need for the UN peacekeepers to protect the SMM monitors from the Russian armed formations; it is sufficient for Russia to instruct its occupation administration in Donbas to stop threatening and intimidating them.

We do not observe Russia's readiness to make it happen. Moscow is not interested to let the monitors watch dozens of wagons with coal stolen in Ukrainian mines in Donbas to be transported to the Russian Federation through the Chervona Mohyla railway station near Voznesenivka, spotted by the SMM last week. Likewise, it doesn't wish the SMM to report on towed howitzers 152mm moving north-west to the contact line near Kadiivka followed by ten times increase of ceasefire violations in this area. The Russian occupation administration in Donbas prefers pushing the monitors from border crossing points, denying access to heavy weapons holding areas and even to SMM own assets like acoustic sensor equipment in Donetsk city. The Mission's capabilities to establish contact with local population to gather information and report facts in accordance with its mandate continue to be severely restricted by members of the Russian armed formations who deny the SMM access to schools and accompany monitors in hospitals. We once again urge Russia to put an end to such incidents, bring the perpetrators to account and lift any restrictions imposed on the freedom of movement and access of the SMM.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The unwillingness of the Russian Federation to implement its commitments remains also evident on humanitarian provisions of the Minsk agreements. The last meeting of the TCG and its working groups, including the WG on humanitarian issues, hasn't brought once again any meaningful results on exchange of detainees, search of missing persons, opening of the Zolote crossing point and renewal of access of international humanitarian organizations to the Russia-occupied areas of Donbas. We didn't receive any response to our proposals to release the Russian citizens

detained in Ukraine for their crimes against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, in exchange for Ukrainian political prisoners illegally held on the territory of the Russian Federation. A real progress in this field is urgently needed to bring people back to their families and to alleviate the suffering of those who are forced to live under the Russian occupation.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

In the previous meetings of the PC, we informed the participating States on the ongoing violations by the Russian Federation of Ukraine's sovereign rights in the Black Sea, Sea of Azov, and the Kerch Strait, such as illegal exploitation of natural gas from the Crimean offshore and building a road-and-rail bridge across the Kerch Strait without the consent of the Government of Ukraine. Regretfully, the Russian occupation administration in Crimea continues its illegal activities. On 4 May, it unlawfully detained a Ukrainian fishing vessel and its crew in the vicinity of the Crimean coast. As emphasised in the relevant Statement by the Ukrainian MFA, Ukraine remains the coastal State with regard to the waters around Crimea, including the territorial sea extending 12 nautical miles from its coast, and the detention of this fishing vessel usurps Ukraine's sovereign rights in those waters and as such is a manifest violation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as of customary international law. We demand the immediate release of the fishing vessel and its crew.

The Russian occupation administration in Crimea also continues its policy of targeting all those who disagree with occupation and are brave enough to publicly voice their position. Last Friday, a Ukrainian activist Ihor Movenko was sentenced by so-called Gagarinsky district court of Sevastopol city to two years in prison on trumped-up charges of extremism for mere posting several comments in the "Crimea is Ukraine" group in a social network. This case underlines how far the Russian authoritarian regime has proceeded in strengthening the police state, in which no one is guaranteed his fundamental freedoms and the right to have his or her own opinion, which differs from the views of Moscow. How far the Russian state is ready to proceed in its denial of privacy and human rights is clearly seen in Moscow's large scale ongoing attempts to block the Telegram messaging application at any cost.

We urge Russia to immediately put an end to grave violations of human rights and binding norms of international humanitarian law taking place in the occupied Crimea. We again urge the Russian Federation to reverse the illegal occupation of Crimea and Sevastopol, and to stop its aggression, including by withdrawing its armed formations from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and fully implementing its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**