

**Statement of the Delegation of Ukraine
at the Working Session 1 “Democratic institutions, including: democracy at the
national, regional and local levels, democratic elections” of
2018 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**

Mr. Moderator,

Distinguished participants,

The subject of ensuring the realization of the electoral rights of Ukrainian citizens remains relevant to date.

It is expected that in the coming months, in accordance with Article 103 of the Constitution of Ukraine, the Parliament of Ukraine will appoint a regular election of the President of Ukraine on March 31, 2019.

The Constitution of Ukraine guarantees free elections to all citizens, as well as general, equal and direct suffrage during a secret ballot.

However, the implementation of electoral rights for more than 5 million Ukrainian voters will not be possible. Even today, contrary to international law, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol are occupied and annexed by the Russian Federation. Also, a significant number of districts and cities in the Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts remain under occupation as a result of the unprecedented intervention of the Russian occupation armed forces and the sympathy of local collaborators. And all this is happening in Europe, in the 21st century.

Of course, the Russian side must strictly adhere to the provisions of the Minsk agreements, the key points of which are the demilitarization of the occupied territories today. An important provision of the Minsk agreements is the transfer of the state border of Ukraine from Russia under the full and unconditional control of the Ukrainian side. In this regard, there are strange attempts by some Russian officials to hold so-called "local elections" in the occupied territories. Obviously, under the blows of Russian weapons it is a priori impossible to adhere to generally accepted principles of electoral law. Such elections are impossible neither in terms of Ukrainian legislation nor in terms of the letter and spirit of the Minsk Agreements. It is not for the Russian side to decide which electoral system should be used in another sovereign state of the world. Similarly, Moscow should not indicate which candidates or political parties might or might not participate in the election process. Freedom of the media, registered under Ukrainian legislation, can not be the subject of discussion. Instead, the leaders of the puppet pseudo-states proclaimed with the active

participation of Moscow allow themselves to impose censorship towards desirable or undesirable media.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my request to the OSCE member states not to send observation missions to the Russian Federation until Russia leaves the territory of Ukraine and ceases to interfere with the sovereign affairs of the Ukrainian state. Your hypothetical participation in such elections will be considered by the Russian side not merely as recognition of the annexation of the Crimea and Sevastopol and occupation of the East of Ukraine, recognition of the legitimacy of the Russian parliament elected by the population of the annexed territories. I want to emphasize that Ukraine has been and remains committed to the fulfillment of all international obligations, in particular regarding compliance with the civil and political freedoms of Ukrainian citizens.

I call on the authorities of the Russian Federation to recall the existence of universally accepted principles and norms of international law and to withdraw its armed forces from the territory of another sovereign state - Ukraine. It is about Crimea, the city of Sevastopol, as well as some districts and cities of Donetsk and Lugansk regions. The kleptomaniac country must always remember the prominent quotation of ancient Roman lawyers: "A thief or robber of a thing does not become its owner."

Thank you for your attention.