



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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

As for delivery by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1132nd meeting of the Permanent Council,
2 February 2017

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to start by thanking again the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship for convening a special Permanent Council on Tuesday, 31 January, to have a debate concerning drastic military escalation in Donbas, the offensive of the hybrid Russian forces and its disastrous consequences for the civilian population, specifically in Avdiivka. On the same day these acute security and humanitarian problems were raised in the UN Security Council, whose press-statement called for an immediate return to a ceasefire regime.

On this day the SMM registered the highest number of explosions in the Donetsk region yet recorded. In particular, as specified in the SMM report of 1 February, the monitors registered approximately 1800 and then 2640 outgoing explosions of MLRS (unknown type) from the occupied Horlivka, 65-80 outgoing explosions of MLRS “Grad” from the occupied Yasynuvata, almost 200 impacts of MLRS rounds near Avdiivka.

However, despite the diplomatic efforts and calls on Russia and its proxies for ceasefire, the hybrid Russian forces have continued their assault on Avdiivka and its suburbs, intensively using proscribed heavy weapons, including MLRS “Grad”, tanks, artillery and mortars. Yesterday morning, residential areas of Avdiivka were shelled by MLRS “Grad”, causing destruction. One woman was killed, three persons were wounded, 52 houses were destroyed fully or partially. In the last 24 hours the attacks by the hybrid Russian forces killed two Ukrainian servicemen, wounded ten and left four injured. Since launching the offensive on Sunday, only yesterday the Russian side provided the security guarantees for repair works and only until 17.00 hours. The Ukrainian emergency repair teams which immediately moved to locate the electric power line disruption and carry out the necessary repair works came under fire of the hybrid Russian forces, disregarding the security guarantees, and were forced to return.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian authorities have continued to take exhaustive measures to prevent humanitarian disaster in the town, which is cut off from electricity, normal heating and water supply in freezing weather conditions. On Tuesday the Prime Minister of Ukraine visited Avdiivka, assuring co-ordination and full support to address the needs of the people. As of this morning the offer of

voluntary evacuation was used by 175 people, including 94 children. The security and humanitarian situation rapidly deteriorates along the entire line of contact as a result of large-scale cease-fire violations by the hybrid Russian forces, which is well registered by the SMM report of 1 February.

The situation remains extremely dangerous. The hybrid Russian forces do not abandon their offensive plans, extended a short cease-fire window and broke it. The shellings continue as we speak. Early this morning the SMM informed about denial of entry to Yasynuvata, preventing further movement to the Donetsk filtration station. The SMM was able to proceed only after over 1,5 hours.

We strongly urge Russia to immediately halt the offensive actions and shellings of Avdiivka and in Donbas as a whole. We reiterate Russia's responsibility for the casualties, destruction, displacement and human sufferings it has brought to Donbas. We urge Russia to stop flagrant violation of the Minsk agreements it has signed. Establishment of a sustainable cease-fire regime and security are urgently needed to meet humanitarian needs of the civilian population.

Distinguished colleagues,

The current military escalation near Avdiivka is not an isolated gross violation of the Minsk agreements by Russia, but a continuation of the aggressive patterns of its military and political planners. In the course of one month, from 24 December 2016, when the cease-fire was due to get reestablished, until 25 January 2017, the hybrid Russian forces violated cease-fire 1485 times, 348 attacks were carried out by proscribed weapons. They were carried out with multiple weapons, missiles and rounds. Nine Ukrainian servicemen were killed, 70 were wounded in that period.

Mr. Chairman,

The cease-fire violations and offensive operations of the hybrid Russian forces are sustained by the permanent flow of weapons, ammunition and manpower from Russia through the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border.

Because the SMM remains strictly restricted in its freedom of movement in the occupied areas, its reports can only indicate "a tip of the iceberg" concerning the military movements and flows in those areas. We took note of the report of 30 January about the presence of 13 MLRS "BM-21 Grad" in violation of withdrawal lines near the town of Khrustalnyi in Luhansk oblast. Prior to that, on 22 January the SMM reported about observing near Khrustalnyi five stationary trucks with boxes of MLRS "Grad" rockets and seven other trucks with additional boxes.

On 27 January the SMM reported about spotting 45 military-type trucks assessed as modern models of Kamaz and Ural trucks (which are in use by the Russian Armed Forces) near Amvrosiivka controlled by the Russian hybrid forces in the Donetsk oblast.

These findings underscore the urgency of the establishment of permanent OSCE monitoring and verification at the Ukrainian-Russian state border as a critically important step for de-escalation in Donbas.

The restrictions on the SMM's freedom of movement and access in areas, not controlled by the Government of Ukraine, prevent it from effectively fulfilling its mandate and presenting a full picture of the situation. We draw attention in this regard to the fact that as the hybrid Russian forces launched an assault on Avdiivka, including with the use of heavy weapons from residential areas of Yasynuvata, they denied access to Yasynuvata of SMM monitors, confirmed by the mission's reports of 30 January, 31 January and 1 February.

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the calls of yesterday's TCG meeting on strict adherence to full and comprehensive cessation of fire; withdrawal by 5 February 2017 into permanent storage sites of all weapons regulated by Minsk agreements to the distances defined in them and beyond the respective lines; safe and secure access for SMM to fulfil their mandate; facilitation of humanitarian efforts, including through repair of infrastructure. While assuring of Ukraine's commitment to the path of peaceful resolution, we expect Russia and its proxies to deliver on these calls in good faith.

Mr. Chairman,

Although the focus of our current attention is placed on de-escalation and peaceful resolution of the conflict with Russia, taking place on Ukraine's territory of Donbas, the resolution of the crisis in and around Ukraine requires not only full implementation of the Minsk agreements, but also a peaceful de-occupation of another part of Ukraine's sovereign territory - the Crimea.

It is important for the international community to continue to stand up vocally against serious human rights violations, repressions and persecutions, perpetrated in Crimea under Russia's illegal occupation. These violations continue. Most recently, the European Federation of Journalists reminded Russia of Ukrainian journalists Mykola Semena and Roman Sushchenko, who face fabricated charges of, respectively, separatism and espionage and called for their immediate release.

At the last Permanent Council we drew attention to the detention on 25 January of Nikolay Polozov, the lawyer of the Deputy Chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis Ilmi Umerov. On 26 January the Russian authorities detained and placed under arrest Emil Kuberdinov, the lawyer of Ilmi Umerov, Mykola Semena and others who disagree with Russia's illegal occupation of the peninsula.

These detentions demonstrate that lawyers who defend dissenting voices in Crimea join the list of victims of the Russian occupation. The openly political character of such persecution prompted a public letter of a group of Russian lawyers on 30 January, pointing out to the consistent policy of suppressing fundamental human rights and freedoms in Crimea. Let me make a quote from the assessment of the situation by the Russian lawyers: "Freedom of assembly, conscience and speech are in fact abolished on the peninsula. Criminal charges, administrative arrests and fines are generously dispensed to the people of any views and fields of activity only for an attempt to express their opinion, to hang out a flag in a car, to criticize the

authorities or to hold a peaceful protest. The judicial system in Crimea is reduced to the level of formality”.

We again urge the Russian Federation to stop persecutions, to immediately free illegally detained persons and exercise responsibility for respect of human rights and freedoms on the part of Ukraine’s territory it invaded and illegally occupied nearly three years ago.

Mr. Chairman,

Yesterday Kremlin indicated what prompted its military offensive in Donbas, viewing the escalation as “a ground for resuming dialogue and cooperation between Moscow and Washington”. Russia again opted for deadly violence. In this connection it is of paramount importance for the international community to continue to be firm and clear: aggression will bring cost and not rewards. Russia’s flagrant violations of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity must be fully corrected.

We urge Russia to return to the tenets of international law, to implement in good faith the undertaken Minsk commitments and reverse the illegal annexation of Crimea.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.