



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 Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1164th meeting of the Permanent Council,
16 November 2017

Mr. Chairperson,

As the Russian Federation continues to be in clear, gross and uncorrected violation of OSCE principles and commitments and persists in its armed aggression against Ukraine, the toll of casualties among civilians and servicemen mounts and the scale of destructions and human sufferings increases. The SMM reported about 425 civilian deaths and injuries, including of 39 children, since the beginning of 2017. These are the tragic consequences Russia’s ongoing aggression. The Russian hybrid forces keep using residential areas of the certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, which are under Russia’s effective control, for their military purposes entirely neglecting the risks for the local population. Following previous SMM’s reports to that effect, on 10 November the SMM “noted the presence of armed persons at the entrance of a kindergarten” in non-government controlled Olkhovatka 52km north-east of Donetsk, from which children were forced to move to another kindergarten a year ago.

I would remind the Permanent Council of the request by the residents of non-government controlled Pikuzy in Donetsk region of Ukraine for the immediate withdrawal of armed men and weapons from residential areas of the village, which was reported by the SMM in the beginning of October this year. Last Wednesday, the SMM patrol while being near a store in the centre of the same Pikuzy “saw a man in military-style clothing” firing shots from an assault rifle into the air. The same day, the SMM observed armed men place an inert unexploded ordnance and a warning sign on the road to prevent civilian traffic through non-government controlled Nova Marivka.

While continuing to terrorize the civilian population in Donbas, Russia and its proxies maintain strict restrictions on disclosure of any information by the locals to the SMM. As on numerous occasions before, on 8 November the SMM again reported about such restrictions, when the medical staff in Debaltseve “told the Mission that information on hospitals could be provided” only by the members of

illegal armed formations in Donetsk city. Unfortunately, instead of effective accomplishment of its tasks, the Russian part of the JCCC plays its own role in intimidating the local population, in particular by circulating fakes about Ukrainian Armed Forces, as was the case on 14 November.

Distinguished colleagues,

At the last week's Permanent Council the delegations pointed out to the SMM report registering the presence of a serviceman of military intelligence of Russia's Armed Forces near Novoazovsk. The flow of Russian troops, fighters and weaponry across the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border continues. As a result cease-fire violations of constantly fluctuating intensity, volatility and unpredictability are the terms consistently used by the SMM in portrayal of the security situation in the conflict area. The Minsk Package of measures of February 2015 was accompanied by a joint declaration of the leaders of the Normandy Four countries reaffirming full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, including by the Russian President. However, the Russian Federation has been breaching this reaffirmation each and every day and continues to do so.

In particular, the Report of the Acting Chief Observer at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk for the period from 25 April to 31 October 2017 registers 1,833 crossings of the persons in military-style outfits during the reporting period and notes that some of them were wearing badges or flags of the illegal armed formations from Donetsk and Luhansk. As the OSCE observation at those checkpoints covers only a 40 metres stretch of the over 400 km long uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border, one can only guess about the real numbers of the mercenaries and regular Russian troops, illegally crossing the border to sustain violence in Donbas. They do so having at their disposal hundreds of heavy weapons, ammunition, and means of reconnaissance, communication and control. Last week the Russian military jamming system Zhitel R-330 was again registered in Donbas, this time near the non-government controlled Zemlyane (Luhansk oblast) at a distance of 7 km from the contact line. It well explains why every SMM weekly report points out that the monitoring in "border areas not controlled by the Government" is "hindered by continued refusal of those in control of these areas to provide security guarantees enabling the SMM to open additional forward patrol bases and patrol hubs in the area."

Elsewhere in the areas under the effective Russia's control the SMM continues to face deliberate threats, intimidations and attacks by Russian fighters. On 9 November, an armed member of the illegal armed formation from Donetsk backed up by a machine-gunner told the SMM in Petrivske that the SMM was not allowed to fly its UAV. The next day, when the SMM launched its UAV in the same area, it was fired at twice and the patrol had to leave the area. The ongoing restrictions include denials of access, delays and imposed escorts to restrict the freedom of movement and observation. The last SMM weekly report of 8 November registers eight non-mine-related restrictions imposed on the SMM in the non-government-controlled areas, with four of them relating to the denial or delay

of SMM's access to permanent storage sites or compounds. Thus, in the last 5 weeks the SMM encountered 44 deliberate non-mine related restrictions in Russia-controlled parts of Donbas with 0 measures taken by the Russian side to remove these restrictions. Let there be no mistake: these are not only restrictions on the SMM's mandated freedom of movement, these are restrictions on the ability of the OSCE community to be fully informed about the scope and intensity of Russia's direct involvement and support of violence in Donbas. The Russian delegation in the OSCE continues to exploit the "blinding" of the SMM in Donbas, in particular along the uncontrolled segments of the border with Russia, to propagate its false narratives and divert attention from its unabating armed aggression.

Against this backdrop, to achieve peaceful resolution it remains imperative to seek establishment of sustainable cease-fire, withdrawal of Russian troops and weaponry from the Ukrainian territory, full freedom of movement and access of the SMM in conflict-affected part of Donbas, including along the border with Russia. These are commitments undertaken by Russia when signing the Minsk agreements. Until now Russia defies their implementation.

Distinguished colleagues,

It is important that despite the denial by Russian occupation authorities of permanent international human rights monitoring in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol the international community and non-governmental organizations maintain their sharp focus on the developments in Crimea and Russia's flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. As recently underlined by one of the most respected international NGOs "Human Rights Watch", the "Russian authorities in Crimea have intensified persecution of Crimean Tatars, under various pretexts and with the apparent goal of completely silencing dissent on the peninsula." In the last month, the HRW researchers in Crimea "documented criminal prosecutions for separatism against Crimean Tatars who had criticized Russia's actions in Crimea, as well as new and ongoing baseless terrorism-related prosecutions. Researchers also documented detention and fines for Crimean Tatars who peacefully staged single-person pickets to protest the arrest and prosecution of other Tatars."

We are grateful to all OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation which supported and promoted the draft UN General Assembly resolution "Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)" adopted by the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly on 14 November. We must remain firm and united in upholding the fundamental OSCE principles and commitments on respect for human rights and freedoms as a key pillar of democracy and security.

We again urge the Russian Federation to return to the tenets of international law, to stop its aggression against Ukraine, including by withdrawing its troops from the Ukrainian territory, and to reverse the illegal occupation of Crimea.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.