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**STATEMENT BY MR. DMITRY BALAKIN,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1177th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 March 2018

On the fourth anniversary of Crimea's reunification with Russia

Mr. Chairperson,

It is my pleasure to have this opportunity to speak on the highly important matter of Crimea's reunification with Russia. On 18 March we mark the fourth anniversary of this truly historic event.

Crimea's people waited many years for the chance to exercise their lawful right to self-determination – a right enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and affirmed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, and the CSCE Helsinki Final Act.

There are absolutely no grounds for casting doubt on the results of the referendum held in Crimea on 16 March 2014. Those familiar with the real situation in Crimea have no doubt that the vast majority of the region's people expressed their genuine desire for reunification with Russia and continue to support this decision. All who speak of so-called "annexation" and the need to "force" Crimea back into Ukraine show the utmost disrespect for the region's people, in whom this territory's sovereignty is ultimately vested.

The event that spurred Crimea's reunification with Russia was the violent anti-constitutional coup d'état that took place in Kyiv four years ago. The 20 February 2014 attack near Korsun-Shevchenkivskiy by frenzied radical nationalists against a column of buses carrying Crimean residents home from Kyiv marked a major turning point. For Crimeans, this was the milestone that made clear what road they would have to take.

Overall, Crimeans began resisting forced Ukrainization and Russophobia back in 1991, when the majority of the region's people voted in a referendum to restore Crimea's autonomy within the Soviet Union – in other words, to make it an independent entity, separate to Ukraine, within the Soviet Union. This resistance continued for close to 25 years and ended with the 2014 referendum on reunification with Russia.

The attitude taken by the authorities in Kyiv to the people of Crimea was expressed by one of the nationalist leaders, Dmytro Yarosh: “Crimea will be Ukrainian, or it will be emptied of its people.” The Ukrainian Government did not stop at words. They organized a water, food, transport and energy blockade. The State Council Presidium of the Republic of Crimea, in its appeal to the United Nations General Assembly of 25 December 2017, called these measures terror used against the Crimean peninsula’s residents.

Ukrainian nationalists continue to call for punishing the people of Crimea for the choice they made. A similar discriminatory position is taken by the governments of countries that have imposed restrictive measures on the people of Crimea. But in 1975, these same countries declared that the Helsinki Final Act’s greatest achievement was that it enshrined the freedoms of speech, movement, and peoples’ rights to decide their own future. It is paradoxical that these countries are now punishing the people of Crimea for exercising these rights and freedoms.

Accusations regarding respect for human rights are particularly inappropriate coming from Ukraine, which, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, made no effort in this area and ignored the recommendations of international human rights organizations.

Life has shown that the people of Crimea made the right choice. Seeing the Ukrainian Government’s policy of persecuting dissidents, which led to the bloody tragedies in Odessa and Mariupol, and the civil war in Donbas, it is not hard to imagine what kind of measures radical nationalists would have taken in Crimea. By reuniting with Russia, Crimea avoided such atrocities.

Today, the situation in Crimea is calm and its residents enjoy unhindered exercise of all rights foreseen by Russia’s international obligations and guaranteed by the Russian Constitution.

Crimea looks to the future with confidence. Its structural integration into the Russian Federation is now complete. Its regional legislation has been harmonized with Russian federal legislation. The socio-economic situation is stable, despite the difficult legacy of the past. Real budget revenue is on the rise, housing construction is picking up pace, industry and agriculture are growing, and we see a stronger tourism sector. The free economic zone is developing rapidly. Total investment now exceeds 100 billion roubles (1.7 billion US dollars). Investors from China, India, and a number of OSCE participating States are showing great interest in doing business in the region. Crimea has foreign economic ties with sixty-odd countries.

A positive atmosphere continues to prevail in inter-ethnic and inter-faith relations. The federal and regional authorities promote cultural, linguistic, religious and other interests of national minorities, including Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians, in accordance with the Constitution. Fourteen regional national-cultural communities have been registered in Crimea, including two Crimean Tatar groups.

Russian, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar all have the status of State language in the Republic of Crimea. Real possibilities have been created for their study in schools and universities. At any school, parents in Crimea are offered a choice of language in which classes will be taught.

There is proportional representation of the main ethnic groups in the different executive bodies in Crimea. For example, in the region's Interior Ministry, Russians account for 56 per cent, Ukrainians for 29 per cent, and Crimean Tatars for 11 per cent. In the Prosecutor's Office, Russians account for 71 per cent, Ukrainians for 16 per cent, and Crimean Tatars for 10 per cent.

The number of Ukrainian citizens visiting Crimea grows with every passing year. In 2014 and 2015 the figure was around 400,000, but in 2016 it rose to around 700,000, and in 2017 the figure broke the 800,000 mark. In total, 5.13 million tourists visited Crimea in 2017.

All of this is taking place against the backdrop of the Ukrainian Government's media campaign to intimidate its citizens with calls not to visit Crimea, and also despite the fact that many Ukrainians, to enter Crimea, have to spend hours queuing at Ukrainian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border.

In conclusion, we propose that the representatives of the OSCE participating States, parliaments, and non-governmental organizations visit the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol to see the situation first hand and on the ground, rather than from afar, and, as a rule, relying on biased sources. We are ready to receive in Crimea missions from international organizations too, if they are sent in accordance with the procedures that apply for visiting Russian territory.

Thank you for your attention.

**General Assembly**

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Agenda item 72 (c)

Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives**Letter dated 29 December 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement of the Presidium of the State Council of the Republic of Crimea to the General Assembly in connection with the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution [72/190](#) on the situation of human rights in Crimea (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 72 (c).

(Signed) V. Nebenzia



Annex to the letter dated 29 December 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement to the General Assembly in connection with the adoption of the resolution on the situation of human rights in Crimea

In this statement, we will address the adoption by the General Assembly on 19 December 2017 of resolution [72/190](#) on the situation of human rights in Crimea, the draft of which was put forward by Ukraine.

We believe the adopted document to be inconsistent with the fundamental principles and provisions of the United Nations enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is the primary international instrument related to the promotion and protection of human rights and freedoms, and also with other international human rights instruments. It is deplorable that the Crimean people must witness this process, not least because it was in Crimea that the decision to establish the United Nations was taken.

The Ukrainian action also disregards the right of peoples to self-determination, which is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, international covenants on human rights and the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. This right was exercised by the multi-ethnic Crimean people in the historic referendum of 16 March 2014.

We consider that the events of spring 2014 clearly demonstrated that the Crimean people were prepared to stand up for the fundamental right of each person and citizen: the right to life. The alternative would have been civil war and bloodshed, which would have continued until the present, particularly because the leadership of the Ukrainian State still includes individuals who are concealing their pro-fascist and inhumane views behind the mask of democracy.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” But can we really say that the actions by Ukraine towards the Crimean people reflect this? We consider the water, food, transportation and energy blockade to be a form of terror against all inhabitants of the Crimean Peninsula.

It is also worth remembering that “concern” about the observance of human rights in the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol is being expressed by a State that has unleashed a bloody and fratricidal civil war in south-eastern Ukraine and has collectively labelled the people of the Donbas region — its own citizens, as Kiev asserts — terrorists and separatists. Moreover, baseless accusations of human rights violations are being made against Russia and the multi-ethnic Crimean people by a country which has incorporated into its ideology aggressive nationalism, glorification of Nazism and neo-Nazism, the violation of the rights of ethnic minorities, the persecution of religious denominations which it finds objectionable, the repression of dissenting voices and a crackdown on the freedom of the media.

Such accusations are particularly out of place and cynical from a State which, throughout the entire period in which Crimea was part of Ukraine, made absolutely no effort to improve the human rights situation in our Peninsula. None of the many recommendations made by international human rights bodies to Kiev between 1991 and 2013 have been implemented.

Lastly, how can there be talk of “concern” for the Crimean people given that representatives of Ukraine repeatedly emphasized in their statements in one of the General Assembly committees in October and November that there is no such thing as a “Crimean people”? Should we really be surprised that, faced with this kind of attitude, over 90 per cent of this “non-existent” multi-ethnic Crimean people voted for the historic reunification with Russia?

Representatives of States Members of the United Nations,

Distinguished colleagues,

We repeat our proposal that a visit to Crimea should be arranged in order to provide an objective assessment of the human rights situation in our Republic. We are particularly looking forward to the visit of parliamentarians from countries that supported the General Assembly resolution initiated by Ukraine.

Presidium of the State Council of the Republic of Crimea
Simferopol, 25 December 2017
