



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

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ENGLISH only

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

As delivered by the Delegation of Ukraine  
to the 1120<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
24 November 2016

**Mr. Chairman,**

Last Monday Ukraine marked the Day of Dignity and Freedom, commemorating the third anniversary since the nationwide movement in support of the democratic values and against dictatorship started. It has been the resolute choice of Ukrainians to build a prosperous and rule of law based European state, where human rights and fundamental freedoms are fully respected.

One could hardly anticipate that Russia’s response to democratic aspirations of Ukrainians would be putting into action its plans of multifaceted aggression against the neighbouring State. Illegal occupation of Ukraine’s Crimea and Sevastopol and bloody conflict in Donbas were a result of Russia’s military intervention and its expansionist claims for the entire south-east of Ukraine. Russia chose to deal a destructive blow to the vision of Europe whole, free and at peace.

So far the OSCE fundamental principles, in particular those on respect to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of frontiers, continue to be grossly violated by the Russian Federation. These violations and their further aggravation can only be stopped by firm and united response of the international community.

**Distinguished colleagues,**

As noted in the SMM’s weekly report of 16 November, the security situation had deteriorated along most of the contact line and more ceasefire violations had been recorded than in almost any week this year. The level of violence increased as the combined Russian-separatist forces maintain unabated their armed provocations against the Ukrainian servicemen and the civilian population. The fluctuations and decrease in hostilities, registered by the Mission on certain days, remains rather an exception, which can hardly give rise to optimism.

We are particularly concerned over the increased use of heavy weapons, in particular rocket artillery. This week the Ukrainian military informed that alongside the use of the

MRLS GRAD, the combined Russian forces again shelled the Ukrainian positions in Mariupol sector with the GRAD-P portable rocket launcher system. The SMM in its report of 19 November again confirmed the use of this Russia-produced weapon, which has never been on the inventory of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and never legally supplied to the territory of Ukraine.

Extended use by the combined Russian-separatist forces of high caliber artillery and mortars compounds heavy sufferings of the civilian population in Donbas and destruction of the local infrastructure. In particular, on 18 November the shelling of Krasnohorivka from 152 mm caliber artillery resulted in injuries of civilians and heavy damages to the local school. The next day in one village of Lebedynske the SMM observed 11 fresh impacts caused by 122 mm caliber artillery, 82 mm and 120 mm caliber mortars.

As before, most of shellings by the Russian hybrid forces occur during the nighttime to conceal the ceasefire violations from the OSCE monitors. It is important that the SMM seeks possibilities to report on such night incidents. In particular, in its report of 21 November the Mission informed of 16 outgoing mortar rounds during the night of 18-19 November in Debaltseve and explosions 6-12 km north-west. Similar observations were made by the monitors the following night.

Sniper fire and the direct attacks of the subversive groups remain on the list of the hostile actions that the combined Russian-separatist forces resort to. In particular, on 20 November they carried out a failed 2 hour-long attack on the Ukrainian positions near Tryokhizbenka. The shellings and attacks make the toll of casualties grow. On 17-22 November 1 Ukrainian soldier was killed and 10 were wounded. There are reports of civilians killed and wounded.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The security situation in Donbas was the main subject of discussion during the Trilateral Contact Group meeting, which was held yesterday. The Ukrainian side reiterated that full implementation of the security provisions of the Minsk agreements remains an urgent need and basic requirement for progress on other aspects of the Minsk agreements. This logic and sequence is registered in the Minsk agreements and must be implemented.

We regret that prospects for peaceful resolution in Donbas, charted by the Minsk documents, remain vague due to Moscow's unwillingness to abandon military force and violence as its main tool of blackmail and advancing its political demands. This approach is greatly detrimental for both the security situation in Donbas and pace of implementation of the agreed steps towards peaceful resolution. It also obstructs progress on preparation of the Roadmap, on which expectations were placed at the Normandy Summit of 19 October.

We encourage Russia to further progress on the disengagement initiative, which could also have improvement of the humanitarian situation as its practical outcome. We

deeply regret that Ukraine's efforts to open an entry-exit checkpoint in Zolote, long-awaited by the local population, are not reciprocated by the Russian hybrid forces. Yesterday they again blocked the movement of people and vehicles. We hope that the movement will start as soon as possible, we prepared everything back in March of this year.

Regular ceasefire violations by the Russian hybrid forces in Stanytsya Luhanska do not allow launching disengagement in this area. We call on Russia to implement the undertaken commitments in good faith. For its part, Ukraine remains ready to proceed to withdrawing forces and hardware in this area as soon as ceasefire and other provisions of the Framework Decision are met. If ceasefire holds, the disengagement may start on 26<sup>th</sup> November.

### **Distinguished colleagues,**

We find it unacceptable that SMM continues to experience problems with its freedom of movement and access in the occupied areas of Donbas, which are mostly associated with attempts to conceal armed provocations against the Ukrainian forces, concentration of weaponry and military movements in the vicinity of the contact line and in the border areas. It was a telling incident that happened on 20 November near Veselohorivka, where an armed militant blocked the way for the SMM vehicle by a military truck and prevented it from proceeding further to the village, citing on-going fire in the area. Remaining nearby for 30 minutes the SMM patrol did not observe any ceasefire violation and found neither the truck nor militant, when returning to the location. In dispelling the myths, circulated in the OSCE by the Russian delegation, we found very pertinent the clarifications by the SMM's Deputy Chief Monitor, provided at security briefing on 18 November, about 67% of all denials of access happening in the areas not controlled by the Government. This figure indicates the extent of limitations placed by the Russian hybrid forces to obstruct objective reporting of the SMM.

The scope of SMM's border monitoring in the occupied areas of Donbas remains inadequate to the threats, generated by the uncontrolled border. As reported by the SMM, it is only able to conduct relatively short visits, less than 1 hour, during daytime. Moreover, these visits happen under full control of members of the Russian hybrid forces.

We believe that adoption of the draft MC decision on the OSCE permanent monitoring and verification on the Ukrainian-Russian state border, proposed by the Ukrainian delegation and envisioned by Minsk Protocol, would contribute in practical terms to establishing the necessary transparency at the uncontrolled sections of the border. We note the broad support for the draft, expressed at the informal consultations.

Humanitarian aspects of the situation in Donbas remain a matter of our utmost concern. We find deeply worrying the SMM's reports that the residents in the occupied areas are prohibited from leaving their villages. In its report of 21 November the SMM informed about Novooleksandrivka, where a local resident had not been able to transport his sick

wife to the hospital in Pervomaisk. We strongly condemn the practices of holding the civilian population of Donbas as hostages and a human shield.

An extremely worrying situation is developing in relation to water supplies. Huge debt, accumulated by Russia-backed illegal structures, put the water-supply company on the brink of bankruptcy. Their unwillingness to resolve the problem, created by their criminal enrichment through collection of payments in areas under their control, put the ordinary people at serious risk. We urge Russia to take immediate responsibility for resolving this urgent issue and enacting the agreed mechanism.

Release of hostages and illegally detained persons remains a priority and we deeply regret lack of progress at the TCG meeting in Minsk yesterday. We call on Russia to unblock the release process. The ICRC must be granted immediate access to the hostages in the occupied part of Donbas as it was agreed at the Normandy Summit in Berlin. We also underline that the relevant provision of the Minsk Package of measures applies equally to the Ukrainian citizens, including Oleh Sentsov, Oleksandr Kolchenko and others, who are held in illegal detention in Russia.

A new worrying fact emerged about illegal detention on the Russian territory of a Ukrainian citizen and his transfer to the occupied areas of Donbas through uncontrolled sections of the border. This development which signals the new risks to Ukrainian citizens in Russia was raised yesterday in the TCG.

**Mr.Chairman,**

The repressive actions by the occupying authorities against the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar communities of Crimea persist and arrests under the fabricated charges of “subversive activities” continue. Last week two more residents of Crimea were nominated by the FSB as so called “Ukrainian subversive agents”. The people are defenseless against a KGB-style ruthless oppressive machinery. Any individual, particularly of daring to hold a view or opinion different from that of the occupation regime, faces the options of being thrown into jail either as an “extremist”, “terrorist” or “Ukrainian subversive agent”.

We again urge the Russian Federation, as an occupying power, to take responsibility for halting human rights violations on the peninsula. We call for allowing free and unconditional access for permanent international monitoring in Crimea.

**Mr.Chairperson,**

Before concluding, I express Ukraine’s strong indignation over yet another attack by Russian ultranationalists on the Ukrainian Cultural Centre in the centre of Moscow two days ago, when they climbed the wall of the building to burn down the Ukrainian National flag. The video footage of the attack, which emerged in the internet, captured a gang of offenders wearing armbands with swastikas. We urge the Russian authorities to immediately investigate the attack in full transparency and bring the responsible to account.

**Distinguished colleagues,**

The Ministerial Council meeting will start in two weeks in Hamburg in a challenging security environment. Russia persists in its aggression against Ukraine and flouts the commitments it has signed up to. We encourage all participating States to make the most of the Ministerial Council to stimulate Russia's compliance with the OSCE principles and correction of committed violations.

We urge Russia to return to the tenets of the international law, to halt its aggression against Ukraine and contribute constructively to the peaceful resolution in Donbas by implementing fully and in good face its commitments under the Minsk agreements. We urge Russia to reverse the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

**Thank you, Mr.Chairman.**