



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Statement on Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1236th meeting of the Permanent Council,
18 July 2019

Madam Chairperson,

Ukraine remains committed to the peaceful politico-diplomatic track of resolving the conflict stemming from Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine. On 11 July, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy had a phone conversation with President of Russia Vladimir Putin to discuss the issue of release of Ukrainian citizens illegally detained by the Russian side, and to reconfirm Ukraine's readiness to continue the negotiations in the Normandy format. Next day, the meeting of the diplomatic advisors to the N4 leaders took place in Paris. During it, a number of arrangements were reached on the necessity to speed up implementation of the Minsk agreements, including in the fields of ceasefire, mutual release of the detained persons, as well as to further the disengagement of forces. The next N4 advisors meeting is planned for the end of this summer. Yesterday, the TCG meeting took place in Minsk. The Ukrainian and Russian sides agreed on a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire regime starting from midnight of 21 July, recommitted to full and safe access of the SMM throughout Ukraine and verified the lists of the detained persons to be released.

Meanwhile, the Russian side proceeded with aggressive steps against Ukraine. Yesterday, on 17 July, President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin has once again expanded by his Decree the categories of Ukrainian citizens eligible for simplified obtaining of Russian passports by extending this right to all residents of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. This so-called "passportization" constitutes a blatant violation of the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political unity of Ukraine, a gross interference into internal affairs of Ukraine, and creates additional obstacles on the way of de-escalation of the conflict and reintegration of Donbas. The Office of President Zelenskyy expressed its regret and indignation in this regard. The

MFA of Ukraine in its statement condemned this most recent provocative decision of the Russian side and called on international partners not to recognize these Russian documents and any legal acts, and to strengthen the individual and sectoral sanctions as the only international mechanism of urging the Kremlin to peace.

For the sixth consecutive year, Russia's armed invasion into Ukraine continues to raise the toll of civilian and military casualties, destroy civilian infrastructure and undermine well-being of Ukrainian citizens living in the conflict-affected areas. The people on the ground face daily the risk of being fired at, shelled or hitting a mine. On 13 July, the Russian proxies have intimidated an elderly person from the occupied city of Donetsk to reach the Ukrainian military positions by crossing the Russia-mined area at the contact line. Fortunately, he was not hurt.

Until Kremlin takes the decision to end hostilities and withdraw its troops from the occupied parts of Ukraine, the Ukrainian authorities are determined to mitigate the dire humanitarian consequences of Russia's actions. Starting from last Monday, the Ukrainian side established a free-of-charge shuttle bus service for elderly and disabled persons between the broken bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska and the government-controlled EECF. We are ready to proceed with the repairs of the broken bridge as soon as the Russian side fulfils its own commitments on disengagement, including dismantling of the remaining fortifications by the Russian armed formations.

Inside the Zolote disengagement area, the SMM remains severely restricted in its capacity to monitor and report on the situation on the ground, as the Russian armed formations, as reported by the SMM, continue to block the SMM patrols since November 2018 from proceeding northward along the road T-1316. Neither demining, nor security guarantees have been provided by the Russian side to ensure a safe passage to the SMM.

The consistent policy of denying access of the SMM to the occupied parts of Ukraine remains Kremlin's main tool to conceal its weapons, manpower and supplies. The weekly report of 10 July informs on 25 non-mine related restrictions of the mission's freedom of movement, all of which but one in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas. If you analyze the same report, you will note that all weapons observed in violation of their respective withdrawal lines in Russia-occupied territories of Ukraine had been registered either by aerial imagery, or by long-range UAVs. As the ground patrols are denied access, surveillance by air remains the SMM only effective mechanism to spot at least some part of the Russian heavy weaponry in Donbas.

In these conditions, it should come as no surprise that the long-range UAVs are attacked by the Russian armed formations: since October 2018, four of them were lost over Russia-occupied parts of Donbas. Russia's denial of its responsibility for these losses is unacceptable. It induces further attacks, severely undermines SMM's effectiveness and raises serious concerns on the safety of SMM and its assets. The weekly report of 10 July informed on a surface-to-air missile system with components of a radar system in the same Russia-occupied border area, where an SMM long-range UAV was shot down in October 2018 after spotting on several occasions convoys of trucks illegally crossing the border with the Russian Federation.

The convoys continue to move across the border in this area, as confirmed by the SMM on 12 July with the use of long-range UAV. We fully share the SMM's view that the presence of a surface-to-air missile system poses a risk to the operation of SMM UAVs and affects the SMM's ability to observe those areas.

We urge the Russian side to immediately withdraw this weapon and to ensure safe and secure access of the SMM to the border areas. New routes of illegal border crossing from Russia reported by the SMM near Stepne in its daily report of 13 July and near the train station in Kvashyne in the daily report of 15 July, underline the relevance of the mission's monitoring activities near the border. We strongly condemn Russia's policy of intimidating unarmed civilian monitors who are regularly expelled from the border areas immediately after arrival, as was for instance the case on 14 July at the Chervona Mohyla railway station near Voznesenivka. As soon as the SMM spotted a cargo train heading east, a member of the Russian armed formations told the SMM to leave the area.

Madam Chairperson,

Withdrawal of the Russian occupation forces must also take place in the temporarily occupied Crimea, which remains for now a "grey zone" of human rights and fundamental freedoms for the local population. Russia's repressive policy, especially directed against Crimean Tatars, stays in place. Dozens of them remain illegally detained under fabricated allegations of involvement in the activities of the so-called "terrorist organization". When dozens of Crimean Tatars gathered near the building of the Supreme Court of Russia in Moscow for a peaceful action to support their compatriots, 45 of them were immediately illegally detained by the Russian security forces. The MFA of Ukraine expressed its strong protest in this connection and called on the international community to condemn these illegal actions, to intensify political, diplomatic and sanctions pressure on the aggressor state in order to stop this persecution of the Crimean Tatar people, and to demand that the Russian Federation immediately release the illegally detained citizens of Ukraine.

We again urge the Russian Federation to reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea and to stop its aggression against Ukraine, including by withdrawing its armed formations from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and fully implementing its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.