



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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

As delivered by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1112th meeting of the Permanent Council,
8 September 2016

Mr. Chairman,

Last Monday marked two years since the first document of the Minsk Agreements – the Protocol - was signed on 5 September 2014 by the Trilateral Contact Group of Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE as a mediator following the direct incursion of the Russian regular troops into Donbas. Russian incursion triggered intense hostilities on the ground, in particular near the city of Ilovaysk – the place of one of the most shameful crimes, committed by the Russian Army in Donbas. At least 366 Ukrainian servicemen were killed and 429 were wounded there while leaving the city in the so-called “green corridor” under the guarantees of commanders of the Russian troops.

Ukraine has consistently demonstrated its commitment to full implementation of the Minsk Agreements as a basis for peaceful resolution of the conflict by political means with full respect to Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Regrettably, the unwillingness of Russia to act in the same vein resulted in continuing violence of different intensity, in loss of life and destruction.

It remains a matter of urgency to achieve full implementation of initial security provisions of the Minsk Agreements two years after the first document was signed.

Dear colleagues,

According to the latest arrangements Ukrainian forces strictly observe the cease-fire from 1 September along the entire contact line. It is critical to work on success of this de-escalation attempt as the summer months were marked with the high level of violence. As reported by the SMM in August, even those Ukrainian positions, located far from the contact line, sustained heavy and targeted shellings from the high caliber artillery.

While we register a significant drop in the numbers of cease-fire violations over the first week of September, the sporadic use of deadly force emerges regularly along different

sections of the contact line, in particular near Avdiyivka, Maryinka and Shyrokyne, where armed provocations by the combined Russian-separatist forces persist.

Among the most disturbing cases are attack on the Ukrainian positions near the village of Troitske on 4 September and militants' use of 120 mm mortars near Shyrokyne on 5 September. Since the beginning of September 1 Ukrainian soldier was killed and 13 were wounded. On 6 September a resident of Avdiyivka got heavy gun-shot wound. Two civilians were wounded yesterday. Just as before it remains clear that the prospect of real de-escalation depends on Russia's willingness to renounce violence. We urge Russia to make every effort to secure the ceasefire regime and fully implement other security provisions of the Minsk agreements.

Security will remain fragile if the SMM continues to experience significant problems with its freedom of movement and access in the occupied areas of Donbas. As follows from the Mission's reports in August-September, the situation in this area has not been improved and remains marked by high proportion of denials of access.

It is entirely unacceptable that the OSCE monitors face regular intimidations and threats from the Russian hybrid forces. Placing the monitors at a gunpoint, physical threats, forceful searches of vehicles and accusations of espionage affect the work of this civilian mission and must have no place. We find disturbing that the Russian representatives in the JCCC join the anti-SMM campaign, in particular by filming and posting clips, ridiculing the work of the SMM. The Mission reported on such case in its weekly report of 25 August.

The SMM's monitoring equipment remains another top target for the militants, aiming at making effective performance of the Mission's duties impossible. The most recent incident was reported to happen at the Oktyabr mine in Donetsk on 3 September, when the power to the Mission's camera was cut off and auxiliary equipment was stolen. We urge Russia to deliver on its commitments on SMM's unfettered access and full freedom of movement as well as the security of its staff and equipment.

In late hours of Tuesday an arson attack was made on a parked OSCE vehicle in Ivano-Frankivsk in western Ukraine. We strongly condemn this criminal act and will take every measure to bring the perpetrators to account.

We note the recent Mission's findings that further contribute to the scope of evidence of the Russian direct engagement into the conflict in Donbas. In particular, on 28 July the SMM UAV registered again the Russian jamming system R330 Zhytel, this time near the village of Novohryhorivka. The imaginary of the revealed system was presented at the security briefing this Monday.

The Russian Federation has failed so far to explain how the sophisticated weapons and military equipment, used exclusively by the Russian Armed Forces, including R-330 "Zhytel", made their way to Donbas. Meanwhile, on 31 July the SMM informed of monitors' conversation with a local man in the so-called "DPR"-controlled area, who confirmed he had been involved in transporting weapons from the Russian Federation to

Donbas. We also find telling the observation, made by the SMM in Khartsyzsk on 4 September, when the monitors found 29 trucks with their license plates covered or removed. One of the trucks was reported to have Russian license plates whose cover had partially fallen off. The evidence of Russia's military intervention into Donbas is ample and irrefutable, however this SMM report confirms that Russia continues to go to great lengths to deceive the international community.

These findings underline the critical need to restore control at the uncontrolled sections of the border with Russia and implement without delay an agreed Minsk provision on establishment of a security zone in border areas of Ukraine and Russia, with the OSCE permanent monitoring and verification at the border. It is necessary to establish SMM Forward Patrol Bases and patrol hubs close to the border in order to ensure due monitoring of uncontrolled sections of the border and adjacent areas, including BCPs and transport routes. Deployment of an armed police mission, including in the border areas, is necessary to contribute to establishment of safe and secure environment in Donbas.

Dear colleagues,

We condemn the continuation by the Russian occupation authorities of repressions in the Crimean peninsula against those, who oppose its illegal occupation. A number of Crimean Tatar activists, including Deputy Chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis Ahtem Ciygoz, remain in detention under politically-motivated pretexts. In July the occupation court extended the detention of Mr.Chiygoz, who had now been behind bars for 18 months, until 8 October.

We are outraged by the recent act of punitive psychiatry against Deputy Chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis Ilmi Umerov, who was forcibly placed into the psychiatric hospital in Simferopol. He is criminally persecuted for saying that "*Russia must be forced to leave Crimea and Donbas*". He spent there three weeks without medications for diabetes and heart disease he needed and only yesterday he was allowed to leave.

On the same day, however, Crimean Tatars Ruslan Zeytullayev, Ferat Sayfullayev, Rustem Vaitov and Nuri Primov were sentenced to 7 and 5 years in prison by the Russian court in Rostov-na-Donu under the fabricated charges of "terrorism". These persons were recognized by the Russian "Memorial" human rights center as political prisoners.

We reiterate our call on the Russian occupying authorities to immediately release those illegally detained and imprisoned. We again urge the Russian Federation, as an occupying power, to take responsibility for halting repressions against the Crimean Tatars, for stopping all human rights violations on the peninsula and to allow free and unconditional access for permanent international monitoring in Crimea.

Mr.Chairman,

We welcome that in Potsdam the OSCE Ministers agreed that the resolution of the crisis in and around Ukraine must remain a top priority task in the OSCE agenda. Resolution of the crisis requires that both Donbas and Crimea be de-occupied. For now Russia has not abandoned its aggression, resorts to threatening provocations, like the so-called “Ukrainian subversive group” in the occupied Crimea, preparing grounds for a new stage of Russian aggression against Ukraine. We highly appreciate the strong stance of many our partners, who dismissed Russian deceitful claims and thus contributed to disrupting Moscow’s probe for escalation.

Sabre-rattling, however, remains Russia’s principal tool in relation to my country, and in the wider context – to the regional security. Russia continues its military activities and build-up in close proximity of the state border with Ukraine and in the occupied Crimea, thus increasing instability and insecurity in the region. We strongly condemn the intention of the Russian Army to use the occupied Crimea for the military exercises “Caucasus-2016”.

Under the guise of a sudden inspection of the combat readiness of the Russian Armed Forces on August 25-31, which had in fact become an initial phase of the "Caucasus-2016" military exercises, Russia has concentrated on the south-western direction a joint military force grouping of about 100,000 soldiers (including about 41,000 near the borders of Ukraine), more than 2,500 combat vehicles, 60 ships, 400 aircrafts and helicopters. More than 11,000 soldiers were redeployed to the Southern Military District from other districts of Russia.

It is noteworthy that against the backdrop of the "Caucasus-2016" military exercises, command and staff exercises of the 1 and 2 army corps of the Russian occupation troops in Donbas are being held on 5-9 September. Such practice has recently become regular as all measures of operational and combat training of these units take place within the integrated system of the Russian armed forces under control of members of the General Staff and the Southern Military Command District of Russia.

We reiterate our call on Russia to restore its respect for the norms of international law and the OSCE principles and commitments, to embark on practical implementation of the Minsk agreements, including by withdrawing its troops, mercenaries and military hardware, and reverse the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

Thank you, Mr.Chairman.