



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

**Statement in response to the Report of
Mrs. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, Director of the OSCE Office for
Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**

As delivered by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1219th meeting of the Permanent Council,
7 March 2019

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of Ukraine joins previous speakers in welcoming the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir back to the Permanent Council and thanks her for the presented report on the activities of the Office in 2018 and plans for the current year.

My country values its close co-operation with the ODIHR as it assists the efforts of the Ukrainian authorities aiming at strengthening the democratic processes, institutions and civil society. We look forward to further joint activities responding to requests of the Government of Ukraine and conducted in line with the national legislation.

While continuing to confront the tragic and devastating consequences of the ongoing Russia's aggression, Ukraine stays committed to the chosen course of profound change and transformations that will consolidate democracy, good-governance, rule of law and protection of human rights, fostering the implementation of respective OSCE commitments. Impressive results of progress in the areas of judiciary reform and decentralisation were presented in last Monday's briefing in this hall by a high-level delegation of Ukrainian officials and European experts.

Mr. Chairperson, distinguished colleagues,

Protection of human dignity, of human rights and fundamental freedoms belong to the core of the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. Many challenges exist across the OSCE space, however the most troubling situation with the gross violation of human rights continues to be registered in the territories of Ukraine, temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation. Permanent monitoring by authoritative international organizations is denied there to conceal the extent and gravity of repressions and abuses.

The five years of illegal occupation of Crimea and parts of Donbas by Russia have led to a sharp deterioration of the human rights situation, marked by abductions, enforced disappearances and torture, intimidation and persecution, silencing of dissenting voices through initiation of a large variety of repressive measures, including arrests and issuance of long prison terms on fabricated charges. The

repressive policies of the occupation administration continue to target mostly the pro-Ukrainian activists and members of the Crimean Tatar community.

In view of the growing scale of repressions, there is a constant and increasing need for monitoring and follow-up activities by international institutions. In particular, it concerns the reports of torture of the illegally detained Ukrainian citizens in Russia, as well as serious violations of their rights to a fair trial. There is an urgent need for building up pressure on Russia to make it release the Ukrainian citizens held as hostages by the Russian authorities. We encourage the ODIHR to make further meaningful contribution to the work led by the UNHCHR in implementing the provisions of the UN General Assembly Resolutions regarding the human rights situation in Crimea.

In this context we supported and found useful the expert meeting in Kherson in June 2018 focusing on the human rights situation in Crimea and organised in co-operation with the Office of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. We look forward to respective follow-up activities.

We consider it essential, Director Gísladóttir, for the ODIHR to be more vocal in reacting to gross human rights violations in Russia-occupied Crimea and parts of Donbas, where basic human rights and freedoms of over 5 mln citizens of Ukraine are under severe attack of the Russian occupation administration.

In particular, last week in the Permanent Council we raised the problem of suppression of freedom of religion and belief by the Russian occupation administration wishing to expel the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Jehovah Witnesses, Baptist and Protestant churches and also placing Muslim groups under strong pressure. The Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church appealed to the OSCE to intervene and make Russia stop the persecution of the Church in Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine. We encourage the ODIHR to duly react.

Mr. Chairperson,

We reiterate our concerns about Russia's failure to observe its international commitments and obligations on the standards of respect for human rights and freedoms. Continuous and rapid degradation of human security in Russia moves hand in hand with continuous and sharp increase of security threats emanating from the Russian regime towards the neighbouring countries. As recent years have proved, Russia's aggression poses an existential threat to Ukraine.

The independent human rights organizations assess the current climate to be the most oppressive in the history of modern Russia. Severe restrictions on freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of the media as well as practices of discrimination and erosion of access to justice are widespread and some of them get codified into legislation under untenable pretexts.

Last December OSCE Rapporteur's Report under the Moscow Mechanism on alleged Human Rights Violations and Impunity in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation proved extrajudicial executions of LGBTI persons in this region - the most heinous forms of discrimination and denial of the right to life. It is, indeed, appalling that in the XXI century extrajudicial executions are practiced by the governmental security forces in Russia, people disappear without trace or get locked up and tortured in secret prisons run by security forces. We reiterate the imperative

of establishment of respective international mechanism for independent investigation and request the ODIHR Director to share her views on possible further steps in this regard.

While the Russian authorities publicly speak about the freedom of religion and belief, severe discrimination is practiced in real life. The most evident example are Jehovah Witnesses. In the XXth century they were banned and persecuted by the totalitarian regimes in the Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, presently they are banned and persecuted in the modern Russia.

Madam Director, ODIHR's report for last year activity does not sufficiently inform about thematic activities with Russian counterparts and the areas of such interaction to address Russia's failures in the human dimension. We would appreciate your additional information in this regard. We also encourage the ODIHR to take a proactive position in developing a comprehensive programme of OSCE human dimension assistance to Russia as its current failures have endangered peace and security.

Director Gísladóttir,

I take this opportunity to reiterate Ukraine's recognition of importance of comprehensive electoral monitoring for enhancing the transparency and confidence in the process and, in this light, Ukraine's openness to receive as many international observers, including from ODIHR, as possible to monitor the upcoming presidential elections. In previous elections Ukraine already set the example of receiving the biggest number of international observers among the OSCE participating States.

Mr. Chairperson,

Let me conclude by reaffirming Ukraine's resolve to continue to take efforts in enhancing implementation of the OSCE human dimension commitments, as well as our support for the ODIHR's mandate and activities.

We once again thank you, Director Gísladóttir, for your report and wish success to you and your team in promoting and protecting human security across the OSCE region, including in the situations of foreign occupation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.