



**Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine
at the 806-th FSC Plenary Meeting**
(9 December 2015 at 10.00, Hofburg)
(Agenda item 2)

Mr. Chairman,

Ukraine remains deeply concerned by the significant increase in ceasefire violations perpetrated by the pro-Russian illegal armed groups in certain areas of Ukraine's Donbas. Over the past two weeks since the last FSC meeting the militants' attacks and shellings were registered almost along the entire contact line, being the most intensive ones near Donetsk, Pisky, Mar'inka, Opytne, Avdiivka, Kamyanka, Horlivka, Krasnohorivske, Novohorodske, Zaitseve, Mayorske, Luhanske, Shyrokyne, Sahanka, Tryohizbenka and Pavlopol'.

Infantry fighting vehicles, anti-aircraft systems, 82mm caliber mortars and grenade launchers, were widely used against the Ukrainian forces, resulting in new casualties among the servicemen and civilians. During the period of 26 November-8 December the militants carried out over 134 shellings along the contact line, including with 82mm and 120mm mortars, grenade launchers, heavy machine guns and small arms. As a result of these shellings **3 Ukrainian servicemen were killed and 24 were wounded.**

The Ukrainian military also observed numerous attempts by the pro-Russian militants of conducting subversive operations of the battle formations and tactical rears of the ATO forces along the contact line. Many attempts of placing mines by pro-Russian sabotage and reconnaissance groups were registered in the tactical rear of the ATO forces. Combined Russian-militant groups many times provoked the ATO forces into armed clashes by approaching the Ukrainian advanced positions and carrying out attacks. The Ukrainian military do not respond to provocations unless life is at risk.

These escalating attacks and provocations, also registered by the OSCE SMM, indicate that the combined-Russian separatist forces in Donbas have not withdrawn all heavy weapons from the contact line to the appropriate distances. The growing number of ceasefire violations demonstrates the militants' deliberate intention to de-rail the peace process from the de-escalation path, threatens the ceasefire and progress on Minsk implementation.

Russia and the militants it supports must immediately stop further attacks and end their provocations. Rather than deploying more forces, providing more heavy weaponry, and initiating attacks, the Russian Federation must honor its commitment to the ceasefire by moving all heavy weapons back into storage sites, removing personnel from the line of contact, and observing Minsk withdrawal lines as well as the ceasefire. The Russian Federation has so far failed to do so and bears full responsibility for the overall deterioration of the situation.

Mr. Chairman,

Ukraine continues to implement fully and in good faith its commitments under the Minsk agreements, including on withdrawal of weapons under the Addendum to the Minsk Package of measures of 29 September 2015. The removal of tanks and artillery

below 100mm calibre from the contact line in Donetsk region was launched on 21 October. All tanks and artillery systems of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were relocated to areas beyond the withdrawal lines.

As a result of this withdrawal on 23 November the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine stated the completion of withdrawal of tanks and weapons below 100mm calibre in the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts. The report of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine was communicated to the SMM.

At the same time, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission has registered significant increase of the ceasefire violations, in particular, around Shyrokyne and Horlivka. These settlements are again considered as "hot spots" since all possible kinds of weapons, including the large-calibre, were used by the pro-Russian militants there.

We note with great concern that, in spite of the undertaken commitments on the synchronized withdrawal of weapons from the contact line, the Russia-backed illegal armed groups have moved some weaponry to conceal it, to put it beyond the scope of the Addendum and therefore beyond the verification process. Russia and the militants it supports continue to amass weaponry that can be quickly brought to the front line in their re-escalation attempts.

Distinguished colleagues,

Ukraine welcomes that the SMM increased the number of field presences in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, opening forward patrol bases. The establishment of additional patrol hubs and forward patrol bases, along with more effective use of established and new remote observation tools, will enhance the Mission's capacity.

However, combined Russian-separatist forces continue to interfere actively in SMM operations, thus depriving the OSCE community of the real picture on the ground. We note the SMM recent reports that the OSCE observers do not enjoy by far full freedom of movement and access to the areas controlled by militants and to the Ukrainian-Russian border, in particular in the Luhansk oblast, despite commitments of the Russian side on the freedom of access:

-on 27 November in "DPR"-controlled Zaichenko (26km north-east of Mariupol), a "DPR" "commander" refused to allow the SMM passage, saying he needed approval from his superiors;

-on 28 November, while leaving "LPR"-controlled Sverdlovsk (61km south-east of Luhansk), two armed "LPR" members stopped the SMM, requesting its patrol plan. After checking the route of the patrol, the "LPR" armed members insisted on escorting the SMM claiming to "ensure its safety" on its way to the border crossing point between Ukraine and the Russian Federation in "LPR"-controlled Chervonopartyzansk (89km south-east of Luhansk). However, after approximately 5km the armed "LPR" members, escorting SMM, stopped and said that they had got orders from their superior not to allow the SMM to proceed further;

-on 28 November, at a "DPR" heavy weapons holding area, "DPR" members requested the SMM to sign a logbook which the SMM declined and was subsequently denied access;

-on 30 November at a checkpoint in the vicinity of "LPR"-controlled Pionerske (19km east of Luhansk), two armed "LPR" members prevented the SMM from entering Pionerske citing unspecified security reasons.

In the area of "LPR"-controlled Yurivka (26km south-west of Luhansk), three armed "LPR" members stopped the SMM at a distance of 100m from towed howitzers,

when it was approaching the weapons on foot. After they firmly demanded to leave the area, the SMM returned to their vehicles parked 400m away, where it heard a single shot, possibly fired from one of the “LPR” members;

-on 1 December in the vicinity of the border between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, five armed men stopped the SMM in “LPR”-controlled Izvaryne (53km south-east of Luhansk) and demanded the patrol plan. They denied the SMM further travel. The SMM contacted the JCCC liaison officer but after waiting for two hours, the SMM was again refused access;

-on 2 December:

a) In the vicinity of the border regions, an armed man stopped the SMM near “LPR”-controlled Diakove (70km south of Luhansk). He told the SMM that on 30 November, a group of weapons’ smugglers, who tried to cross into the Russian Federation, had been apprehended and search operations were on-going in the area. He then escorted the SMM to the checkpoint located 5km from the border and did not allow the SMM to proceed further;

b) Near “DPR”-controlled Zaichenko (26km north-east of Mariupol) an armed man did not allow the SMM to visit the village, but only to drive through it.

c) A “DPR” member denied the SMM access to Debaltseve (“DPR”-controlled, 58km north-east of Donetsk), citing unspecified security concerns.

d) An armed “DPR” member denied the SMM access to a heavy weapons holding area unless the SMM signed a logbook. The SMM refused to sign and left;

- on 5 December an SMM patrol comprised of four SMM monitors and the SMM medical officer in two armoured vehicles arrived at a field in the vicinity of “LPR”-controlled Yurivka (26km south-west of Luhansk), where the SMM had observed 12 towed howitzers (D-30, 122mm) during previous visits - in violation of the relevant withdrawal line. The SMM drove towards 12 howitzers (D-30, 122mm) and at 100-150m distance, it spotted three armed individuals standing near one of the howitzers. When the SMM further continued driving towards the howitzers and was at 80-100m distance, one of the armed individuals released a burst of fire into the air with an automatic rifle and another individual pointed his automatic rifle at the SMM, forcing the patrol to immediately leave the area.

We once again reiterate that full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including separatist-held areas along the Ukrainian-Russian border, is crucial for the SMM to fulfill its mandate. We urge Russia to implement its commitments on providing such access.

Mr. Chairman,

The Russian Federation that resorted to armed aggression against Ukraine and claiming interest in peaceful resolution must withdraw its regular armed forces, weaponry and mercenaries from the sovereign territory of Ukraine, and practically deliver on the commitments it has undertaken to resolve the conflict.

We urge Russia to abide fully and in good faith by the Minsk agreements, to return to the tenets of the international law, to halt its aggression against Ukraine and reverse the illegal occupation and annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman