



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 1101th meeting of the Permanent Council,
26 May 2016

Mr. Chairman,

Unfortunately, security deterioration remains a dominating trend in Donbas. After the Normandy Ministerial in Berlin two weeks ago and last Monday’s phone talks of the leaders of Ukraine, Germany, France and Russia, the regular attacks and shellings by the combined Russia-separatist forces persist.

On one day of 22 May 7 Ukrainian soldiers lost their lives and 9 were wounded as a result of the armed provocations by the militants – the highest death toll in the year. The overall number of losses over the past week amounted to 12 killed and 30 wounded Ukrainian servicemen. 2 soldiers were captured. Maintaining violence on the ground remains an element of Moscow’s destabilization strategy in relation to Ukraine. Last week’s SMM weekly report indicated that 24% of weapons observed in the occupied areas were in the exclusion zone and in violation of the Minsk agreements.

During the phone talks of 23 May the President of Ukraine drew attention of his counterparts to the security degradation as a key impeding factor for the peaceful process. It is an important outcome that all leaders acknowledged the urgent need to ensure de-escalation and ceasefire. The President of Ukraine reiterated that the Ukraine’s steps on implementation of the initial security provisions of the Minsk Package of measures, including the comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire, verified withdrawal of heavy weapons and unhindered OSCE monitoring, must be reciprocated by Russia and its proxies in order to create a solid security ground.

At the Normandy Ministerial in Berlin Ukraine presented a comprehensive plan on urgent steps towards de-escalation, including concrete proposals on disengagement of forces, establishment of security zones, stabilization in the hotspots along the contact line, permanent monitoring at the border. We hope the Ukrainian proposals can be swiftly translated into practical steps through the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group and its security working sub-group.

Mr.Chairman,

Russia's readiness to abide by its commitments, undertaken in Minsk and other venues, will be crucial for effectiveness of the international efforts aimed at bringing peace back to Donbas. We regret therefore that we continue to observe significant discrepancy between Russia's peaceful declarations and aggressive activities of the combined Russian-separatist forces in Donbas.

Ceasefire violations by the militants, usually accompanied with the use of mortars, high caliber artillery and other types of heavy weapons, are registered along the contact line on a daily basis. Avdiyivka remains under constant militants' fire. On 21 May the city sustained an intensive shelling with 122 mm caliber artillery, which led to injuries among the local population and heavy damages in the residential areas. On 24 May the militants resorted to direct attack on the positions of the Ukrainian forces near Novotroitske.

The attacks by the combined Russia-separatist forces are premeditated and well-planned. We consider appalling their actions near the Donetsk airport, where the SMM's monitoring cameras have been intentionally disabled by militants since 20 May, right before the increase of their deadly attacks. We expect reaction from the Russian part of the JCCC, which was immediately informed of the incident. Such reaction is still absent.

We fully share the assessment of the Mission that such actions constitute a grave violation of the Minsk Package of Measures. We urge the Russian Federation to facilitate unhindered monitoring and verification of the SMM throughout the occupied areas of Donbas, as Moscow has committed to do in Minsk and at the talks within the Normandy Four. This commitment has not materialized yet as the SMM continues to report about new numerous cases of restriction to its freedom of movement in the occupied areas. Between 19 and 24 May the general number of incidents totaled 20, including 14 cases of denial of access, all but one happened in the occupied territory.

We are concerned over the continuing attempts of the Russia-backed militants to intimidate the OSCE monitors, this time by orchestrating an "anti-OSCE mass protest" in front of the SMM office in occupied Donetsk on 21 May. We share the security concerns, expressed by Deputy Chief Monitor Hug in this regard at the briefing this Monday, and urge Russia to ensure such practices of intimidation are not repeated.

Distinguished colleagues,

During the Normandy Four phone talks the President of Ukraine underlined again that until the problem of the uncontrolled border was resolved, the de-escalation efforts would be of limited effect. The weaponry and other reinforcements to the illegal armed formations continue to arrive from the territory of the Russian Federation. It remains critically important therefore to implement 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.

We took note of the SMM report of 20 May following its monitoring visit to the closed BCP “Uspenka” indicating that people with “DPR passports” and vehicles with “DPR licence plates” are allowed to enter the territory of the Russian Federation. We strongly condemn this flagrant violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and seek relevant explanations from the Russian Federation.

Mr. Chairman,

Full implementation of the initial security provisions of the Minsk Package of measures by Russia and its proxies remains a basic requirement for progress on other aspects of the Minsk Agreements, including the local elections in certain areas of Donbas.

As envisaged by the Minsk Package of Measures, they must be held in accordance with the Ukrainian legislation and the OSCE standards and under the OSCE/ODIHR monitoring. This means, in particular, voting rights for IDPs, participation of the Ukrainian political parties, free functioning of the Ukrainian media and the leading role of the Central Election Commission of Ukraine in managing the electoral process. Security must be ensured for all electoral subjects and election observers.

We consider an armed police mission, deployed throughout the conflict-affected area, can address the needs for establishing a safe and secure environment before, during and after the elections. De-occupation and disarmament of the illegal armed groups should be necessary elements of this environment to ensure free expression of will of the local population in fair elections. The recent discussions within the Normandy Four were important in terms of advancing this crucial matter forward.

Distinguished colleagues,

The human rights situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, illegally occupied by Russia, remains extremely worrisome. We condemn the continuation by the Russian occupation authorities of repressions against those, who oppose the illegal occupation of the peninsula. A number of Crimean Tatar activists, including Deputy Chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis Ahtem Ciygoz, remain in detention under politically-motivated pretexts. On 21 May the occupation court extended the detention of Mr. Chiyo until 22 July.

We are deeply concerned over the destiny of Ervin Ibragimov, member of the Executive Committee of the World Congress of Crimean Tatars and member of regional Mejlis, who was reported missing in Bakhchisaray yesterday. The details of the disappearance resemble the similar cases, which happened in 2014-2015. Since the beginning of the illegal occupation of Crimea by Russia, more than 20 activists, mostly Crimean Tatars, have been reported missing and their whereabouts remain unknown.

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

Mr.Chairman,

I conclude by reiterating our persistent call on the Russian Federation to immediately take practical steps to implement its commitments on peaceful resolution in Donbas, undertaken in Minsk, and to exert its influence on the militants it supports to do likewise. As this has not yet happened, we deem it critical to maintain the political and economic pressure on Moscow to stimulate its return to the tenets of international law.

We urge Russia to restore its respect for the norms of international law and the OSCE principles and commitments, to halt its aggression against Ukraine and reverse the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

Thank you, Mr.Chairman.