



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

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Statement on “Russia’s ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea”

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1189th meeting of the Permanent Council,
14 June 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

At the outset we would like to underscore the importance of maintaining the international spotlight on Russia’s failure to implement its Minsk commitments, its breach of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and their consequences. As emphasised in the recent G7 Summit Communique, this failure is clearly linked to the continuation of sanctions and readiness to take further restrictive measures should Russia’s actions so require. Ukraine strongly welcomes this firm position.

Under the circumstances of Kremlin’s denial of Russia’s responsibilities as a party to the conflict, the issue of deployment of the UN peacekeeping operation in Donbas has gained particular significance. Such operation should be able to create the necessary security environment for further progress in implementing the Minsk agreements, including for conduct of local elections in compliance with the Ukrainian legislation and the OSCE/ODIHR standards as well as facilitating the comprehensive resolution of the conflict. We note that a substantive discussion on the modalities of the UN PKO took place at the Normandy Four Ministerial meeting last Monday in Berlin. Although the views of the Russian Federation are very distant from the needs of the conflict resolution on the ground, it is important to pursue this path of dialogue. We will continue to aim at using all available politico-diplomatic means to end the conflict, to make Russia stop the aggression and reverse its illegal actions. We count upon further consolidated support of the international community.

Mr. Chairperson,

Russia’s persistence in pursuit of aggression against Ukraine remains the main cause of the ongoing hot conflict in Donbas. The Russian armed formations trained, sponsored and led by the Russian Federation continue their daily attacks and provocations, targeting Ukrainian military positions and residential areas alike. As underlined by Ukrainian Foreign Minister P.Klimkin at the recent UN SC meeting on

Ukraine, “daily shelling and armed hostilities – this is the reality for more than 600 000 Ukrainians living on both sides of the contact line”.

The situation around the Donetsk Filtration Station, among other objects of critical civilian infrastructure located along the contact line, remains of particular concern. Its safe functioning and provision of water to civilian population on both sides of the contact line remains a high priority for the Ukrainian authorities, which ensure standing security guarantees for the required repair works. The same is not true for the Russian side denying such guarantees and refusing to return to the JCCC, which negatively affects the security environment, in particular for repair teams. The Russian armed formations reinforce their military positions near the DFS, as, for instance, registered by the SMM on 6 June, and undertake military attacks and shellings. The next day after the SMM spotted this reinforcement of military positions, the station was shelled by the militants and stopped functioning until 9 June, when the repair teams managed to recover electricity and re-launch the DFS.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict, started by Russia and taking place on the Ukrainian territory, lasts for more than four years. In the end of May the Chief Monitor Ambassador E. Apakan informed that only since the beginning of 2018, the SMM had reported over 100.000 ceasefire violations in Donbas. At the same time the SMM regularly points out that what it manages to report is only a tip of the iceberg. It is absolutely clear that sustaining such level of violence would be impossible without the constant supplies of weapons and ammunition illegally transferred by Russia to its armed formations in Donbas and further used against Ukraine and its people.

The SMM’s monitoring contributes to building up evidence about these supplies. On 3 and 7 June, two military-type trucks with an antenna belonging to the TORN radio intelligence system were spotted by the SMM UAV near Russia-occupied Debaltseve. TORN is a modern highly sophisticated system, a recent product of Russia’s military producers, which has never been in use of Ukrainian Armed Forces. The Ukrainian side spotted the presence of these systems in the occupied part of Donbas from 2015, and now they have also been registered by the SMM. The fact of this Russian military presence adds to other SMM registered facts of exclusive and modern Russian weapons and military equipment in the occupied parts of Donbas, among them the jamming system R-330 “Zhitel”, heavy flame-thrower system “Buratino”, portable flame-thrower “Shmel”, “Grad P”, UAV “Orlan-10”. On 5 June, one of these “Orlan-10” UAVs was identified while attempting to conduct aerial reconnaissance near Bakhmut and was shot down by the Ukrainian servicemen. We again put a question to the Russian Permanent Representative about how these Russian weapons and military systems make their way to Donbas, which units they belong to and who operates them.

We draw attention of the Permanent Council that in one single day of 7 June, the SMM UAV and aerial imagery revealed the presence of 119 tanks, 25 towed howitzers, 18 pieces of self-propelled artillery (type undetermined), 11 mortars, and a surface-to-air missile system in Russia-occupied areas. The next day, an SMM UAV

spotted 271 pieces of heavy weapons in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas. These figures give only a rough indication of the strength of the Russian invasion force in Donbas, because we continue to lack proper verification. I would recall that on one single day of 26 May the SMM registered 155 tanks at different locations in the occupied areas.

It is these facts that prompt the Russian occupation administration to strengthen strict restrictions on the SMM to undermine the effectiveness of its monitoring in the Russia-occupied parts of Donbas, including the border areas. The Russian fighters demand SMM patrol plans, restrict access to parts or whole areas in Donbas, impede the use of technical means. The impediments to freedom of movement in border areas not controlled by Ukraine's government have significantly increased this year as reported by the SMM in the Informal meeting on ways to improve transparency along the Ukrainian-Russian border held on 30 May. The SMM UAVs continue to be jammed while flying over Russia-occupied localities: Debaltseve, Sofiivka, Shyroka Balka, Horlivka, Holmivskiyi, Dolomitne, Myrne and Bilorichenskiyi only last week. On 8 June, an SMM LR UAV spotted a surface-to-air missile system in violation of withdrawal lines in the Russia-occupied locality of Holmivskiyi, "with its launching pad angled upwards and assessed as tracking the UAV". The next day, another surface-to-air missile system was used by the Russian armed formations near Ukrainke to fire two missiles at an SMM LR UAV, which have fortunately missed the target. We strongly condemn this incident and remind the Russian side of its direct responsibility for the safety and security of the SMM and its assets that belong to all 57 participating States.

Distinguished colleagues,

Last Monday, Ukrainian journalist Roman Sushchenko, one of the Ukrainian political prisoners in Russia, was unlawfully sentenced by Moscow court after closed hearings to 12 years imprisonment in a strict regime colony. I would remind that Mr. R.Sushchenko, Paris-based Ukrinform correspondent, was captured by Russian FSB on 30 September 2016 in Moscow, where he arrived on a private visit, and immediately accused of "espionage". The MFA of Ukraine expressed its strong protest against this unlawful decision of the Russian regime, we distributed the full MFA comment among the delegations last Wednesday. On 7 June, the Ukrainian Parliament appealed to the international community to impose additional sanctions on the Russian Federation in this regard.

Journalist Roman Sushchenko is one in a long list of Kremlin's victims punished for opposition to or dissent with aggressive actions of the Russian Federation against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. Ukrainian political prisoners are denied access of Ukrainian consuls and proper medical assistance, are tortured, beaten and intimidated to extort "incriminating" confessions. Russia's persecutions targeted the most vocal opponents of its occupation in Donbas and attempted annexation of Crimea, be it Crimean Tatars, Ukrainian journalists or human rights defenders and lawyers.

The Ukrainian side has repeatedly announced within the TCG its readiness to exchange Russian citizens sentenced for violating Ukraine's sovereignty for

Ukrainian political prisoners held on the territory of the Russian Federation and in the Russia-occupied Crimea. We are still waiting for a meaningful response and progress. As underlined this Tuesday during the informal briefing by Ambassador Toni Frisch, Coordinator of the Working Group on Humanitarian Issues of the TCG, such exchange would be an important objective which has to be reached in a parallel and separate process. The issue of Ukrainian political prisoners was addressed in this week's N4 ministerial meeting in Berlin, which should bring us closer to the long-awaited goal.

Meanwhile, in Russian prisons Ukrainian political prisoners Oleg Sentsov and Volodymyr Balukh continue their indefinite hunger strikes as the last resort in their protest against Russia's inhumane machinery of a police state. Today, one month since Oleg Sentsov started his hunger strike with the call to release all Ukrainian political prisoners, we encourage our OSCE colleagues to join the international campaign «Fair Play! #FreeSentsov» initiated by Ukrainian screenwriters, film directors, artists, musicians, and actors on the eve of the FIFA World Cup starting in Russia. We urge Russia to immediately release Ukrainian political prisoners from the Russian prisons. Concerning the FIFA World Cup I wish to draw the attention of all OSCE colleagues to my letter of two days ago calling to refrain from participating in Russia-organised event and explaining why.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.