



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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Statement in Response to Ambassador Martin Sajdik, Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, and Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1175th meeting of the Permanent Council,
8 February 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

At the outset I wish to warmly welcome the CiO's Special Representative Ambassador Martin Sajdik and the SMM Chief Monitor Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan back to the Permanent Council and thank them for their comprehensive reports and updates on the recent developments concerning the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

I am also grateful to the OSCE participating States, which delivered today their clear positions on stopping the conflict and restoring Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. The OSCE as a regional security Organization, based on norms and principles, must continue to aim at effectively addressing Russia's gross non-compliance and using all available instruments to make Russia return to the tenets of international law and withdraw its occupation authorities and armed formations from the sovereign territory of Ukraine. The longer Russia's flagrant violations last, the more they erode the common foundation of the rules-based security order.

Ambassador Sajdik,

We appreciate your efforts on behalf of the OSCE Chairmanship in the Trilateral Contact Group, which also includes Ukraine and Russia as a party that started the conflict. The TCG has a defined role of contributing to implementation of the Minsk agreements as an agreed framework for peaceful resolution of the conflict. Full implementation of security provisions is required to enable secure environment and progress on political aspects of the resolution.

We regret that until now the Russian Federation ignores its responsibility for fulfilling its Minsk commitments, starting from comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire. As a result, the toll of casualties among civilians and servicemen constantly grows. The Russian armed formations keep violating the agreed Christmas ceasefire,

just as they did the previous ones. As reported by the SMM, the numbers of shellings and explosions may exceed a thousand per day. There was one day of 23 January when the Russian armed formations did not undertake a single attack on the Ukrainian forces and no ceasefire violations were registered on that day. It shows that there can be quiet, provided there is political will on the Russian side, which, unfortunately, is not the case. We expect the TCG Working Group on Security to continue to pay its highest attention to the establishment of a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire, withdrawal of forces and heavy weapons.

Russia's ongoing armed aggression against Ukraine heavily relies on regular resupplies of weapons, ammunition and fuel through the Russia-controlled segment of the state border with Ukraine. The critically important measure of the Minsk Protocol, agreed by Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE, on ensuring permanent OSCE monitoring and verification at the border with establishment of a security zone in border areas of Ukraine and the Russian Federation has not been implemented because of Russia's opposition. We encourage the CiO's Special Representative to pursue establishment of the Working Group on border issues in the TCG as a matter of implementation of undertaken commitments.

The continuing hostilities alongside disregard by the Russian occupation administration of its responsibilities pose serious environmental risks and challenges in heavily industrialized and urbanized areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The coal mines are flooded causing contamination of ground waters and soil. The people living in the conflict zone are often left without the access to the basic utilities. Since the beginning of this year the Russian armed formations granted only one out of over 40 requests for security guarantees to enable repair of the damaged essential civilian infrastructure. As reported by the SMM, some repairs have been pending for months and even years, exacerbating the plight of civilians. We look forward to action by the TCG to enable international experts to thoroughly and independently assess the scale of ecological risks, in particular associated with the flooding of mines.

Within the TCG Working Group on Humanitarian Issues, the release of hostages, which took place on 27 December, became one of the most tangible results of the TCG activities last year. It brought dozens of Ukrainians back to their families after long months of delays deliberately caused by the Russian occupation administration and armed formations. As we all witnessed, release took place only when Moscow let it happen. We look forward to speedy release of other conflict-related hostages and political prisoners, including on the territory of the Russian Federation. Today Ukrainian journalist Roman Sushchenko marks his birthday – the second one in a prison in Moscow where he was incarcerated on fabricated charges in 2016. Today is also the birthday of Volodymyr Balukh, incarcerated on fabricated charges in the illegally occupied Crimea. We congratulate R.Sushchenko and V.Balukh on their birthdays, we strongly stand by them and urge the Russian Federation to immediately release them and other Ukrainian citizens who are political prisoners held in captivity by Russian authorities.

Resolution of many urgent humanitarian issues is blocked by Russia, among them opening of the Zolote crossing point and renewal of access of international

humanitarian organizations to the Russia-occupied areas of Donbas. We expect the TCG to keep them in the focus of attention.

Ambassador Apakan,

The SMM and its civilian monitors continue to be the only meaningful international presence on the ground in the area of the conflict started by Russia almost four years ago. We commend the efforts and dedication of the monitors who gather information and establish facts under the circumstances of the ongoing Russia's aggression against Ukraine and unpredictable behaviour of the Russian armed formations.

Being aware of significant risks and restrictions encountered by the SMM monitors in the Russia-occupied parts of Donbas, at every meeting of the Permanent Council we urge the Russian Federation to assume responsibility and put an end to attacks, intimidations and harassment. So far Russia fails to deliver on its commitment to safety and security of the SMM. We condemn in the strongest terms the most recent attack on the SMM patrol near Yasynuvata, when shots were fired in the direction of the monitors from the positions of the Russian armed formations located in immediate closeness to the contact line. We have witnessed from the SMM reports numerous occasions when the SMM was demanded by Russian fighters, often visibly intoxicated, "to leave immediately", backing up those demands with verbal attacks or abuse or with firearms. These incidents are entirely unacceptable and Russia must realize its responsibility for stopping them.

"The SMM again encountered restrictions of its freedom of movement and other impediments to fulfilment of its mandate, mainly in areas outside of government control." This paragraph is present in each and every weekly SMM report. In the first four weeks of 2018, SMM's freedom of movement was restricted 55 times in Russia-occupied areas of Donbas, i.e. 92% of all non-mine related restrictions. This is the level of restrictions maintained for months by the Russian armed formations. The purpose is crystal clear - to "blind" the SMM and deceive the OSCE community about the scale of Russia's intervention. The SMM's access to towns, villages and whole areas in Russia-occupied Donbas, like Siedove, a small village near the border with the Russian Federation, remains denied by the Russian occupation administration. What is the exact meaning of now years-long denial of security guarantees that would enable the SMM to open its forward patrol bases near the Ukrainian-Russian state border? It is Russia's fear of increased transparency and exposure of its ongoing illegal actions which violate every single principle which underpin the OSCE and the European security. The Ukrainian side expects the SMM to put additional emphasis on the issue of establishing additional FPBs at the temporarily occupied territory including areas close to the Ukrainian-Russian state border.

In the Minsk agreements Russia undertook to withdraw its troops, fighters, mercenaries and weapons from the Ukrainian territory. Russia refuses to proceed to the withdrawal, instead consolidating its occupation of parts of Ukraine's territory. As agreed in Minsk, this withdrawal is to be monitored and verified by the OSCE.

Recognising the role of the SMM in contributing to fostering peace and security, Ukraine's Foreign Affairs Minister Pavlo Klimkin directed to the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Italy's Foreign Minister Angelino Alfano a request of the Government of Ukraine for extension of the SMM mandate for another year. We encourage you, Ambassador Apakan, to propose allocation of the necessary financial resources of the next SMM budget for strengthening the Mission's operational capabilities, which would allow to mitigate the existing restrictions on the ground. This should entail increased technical capacities including additional cameras in readily accessible places, acoustic sensors, and satellite imagery. We are grateful for today's update on the use of long-range UAVs and operational details. Successful deployment of long-range UAVs should considerably enhance the Mission's capabilities to monitor the areas near the contact line and adjacent to the Russia-controlled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. Long-range UAVs should also enhance monitoring of main railway hubs and transport routes used by Russia to supply its armed formations in Donbas.

We encourage the Mission to continue monitoring and establishing facts on the humanitarian, social and economic situation of the local population in the occupied parts of Donbas and not be deterred by the bans on communication of locals with the SMM monitors. We expect, in particular, more information on the issue, as put by the SMM, of "limiting the movement of certain individuals from travelling to government-controlled areas". The indication by the SMM that such individuals may even be arrested while crossing the contact line has once again highlighted the plight of civilians living under the Russian occupation and ongoing serious violations of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Witnessing Russia's steps of creeping integration of the occupied territories of Ukraine, we expect due reporting of the SMM on the circulation of fake documents, Russian currency and tax legislation, the seizure of the Ukrainian enterprises and its consequences.

We remind that the mandate of the SMM covers the entire territory of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, where extremely worrisome developments, political repressions and persecutions require adequate monitoring and reaction of the OSCE.

Ukraine will continue to support the activities of the SMM and urges the Russian Federation to demonstrate the same approach to the SMM in the areas it temporarily occupies in Ukraine.

Concluding my statement, I wish to once again thank Ambassador Sajdik and Ambassador Apakan, as well as the entire SMM team for their hard and dedicated work of contributing to peaceful resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and upholding the OSCE principles and commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.