



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Statement on Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea

As delivered by the delegation of Ukraine
to the 1244th meeting of the Permanent Council,
17 October 2019

Mr. Chairperson,

On Monday, 14 October, my country celebrated the Day of the Defender of Ukraine. This day reminds us on the price we have paid and continue to pay for defending our independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity from Russia's ongoing armed aggression. Dozens of thousands of victims, heavy economic losses, a million and a half of IDPs, millions of Ukrainian citizens forced to live under temporary Russia's occupation in Crimea and parts of Donbas. Those are the results of Kremlin's decision to launch an attack against Ukraine, to undermine its statehood, to weaken it and to reassert control of Ukraine.

Last week, the delegation of the Russian Federation talked on the need to turn a blind eye to the ongoing ceasefire violations in the two remaining disengagement areas in Zolote and Petrivske and to start disengagement of forces and hardware immediately, contrary to the TCG decisions and based on the political will. Meanwhile, these violations continue: on 14 October, the Russian armed formations fired Zolote disengagement area with the use of heavy machine guns; the same day, the SMM heard an undetermined explosion assessed as inside Petrivske disengagement area. What we really need, is Kremlin's political will to stop the conflict by ceasing fire and withdrawing its forces from the occupied parts of Ukraine's territory. Russia must stop killing Ukrainian citizens. Only in first three days of this week, attacks by the Russian armed formations in Donbas left 3 Ukrainian servicemen dead and 6 wounded. One single decision is enough to stop violence and further losses. This decision must be taken in Moscow.

It is high time for the Russian side to take its responsibility seriously and to start implementing its commitments undertaken within the Minsk agreements. To stop ceasefire violations, the number of which continues to increase. To withdraw the Minsk-proscribed weapons from the line of contact. To stop hindering the process of disengagement in Stanytsia Luhanska disengagement area, in which both members of the Russian armed formations and a blue container continue to be present inside of it. To stop laying new mines, some of which close to the residential buildings and even in the middle of a road used by civilians. To stop restricting the SMM's freedom of movement and to allow the Mission to monitor and verify fulfilment of the security provisions of the Minsk agreements. To stop violating Ukraine's borders, sovereignty and territorial integrity by sending supplies and conducting an illegal trade with the use of trains bearing administrative numbers of the Russian Federation. All of this was confirmed by the reports of the SMM, activities of which the Russian side so desperately seeks to disrupt. This is where we need a genuine political will to be implemented.

Distinguished colleagues,

We are grateful to all participating States, which do not leave unnoticed these illegal actions and violation of the OSCE principles and norms of the international law by the Russian Federation. Both political support and practical steps are more than welcomed to prevent further violations. Economic sanctions, ban lists, non-recognition of the Russian passports issued for the residents of the occupied parts of Donbas – all of this remains necessary to show the aggressor State that the international community does not accept its actions and is ready to counter them.

Of particular concern is the plight of Ukrainian citizens living under Russia's temporary occupation. We reiterate our request to the Russian delegation to clarify the purposes of the so-called "population survey" in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas, on which the SMM continued to inform in its most recent daily reports. The fact that the persons conducting it told the SMM that they were instructed not to talk with the Mission, gives further cause for concern that the information gathered during it will be used for intimidating local residents. We stress once again to the Russian side the need to ensure full and safe access of the SMM to the occupied parts of Donbas to report on the security situation and to monitor and support respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Moreover, such access must be provided to the temporarily occupied Crimean peninsula. We condemn Russia's decision to deny it for established international human rights monitoring mechanisms to monitor implementation by an occupying Power of the international humanitarian and human rights law, which should document the breaches on the ground. Russia continues to disregard numerous decisions, declarations and resolutions of respectable international organizations, bodies and even courts, undermining international law, the UN Charter and the OSCE principles.

This does not mean we should give up and leave alone Ukrainian citizens forced to live under Russian occupation in Crimea. Their plight remaining in a spotlight of international community contributes to mitigating the consequences of Russia's aggression and deterring the occupation authorities from further strengthening of pressure and intimidation. We need to be able to hear the voices of those Ukrainian citizens, who dare even after more than 5 years of occupation to express their views against it, like recently released Volodymyr Balukh kept for almost 3 years behind bars for hoisting Ukrainian flag at his house in Crimea.

Regretfully, the Russian side continues its pressure and intimidation. In the evening of 9 October, a Ukrainian activist Oleh Prykhodko and his wife (as witness) were detained by the Russian occupation security services in their home in Crimea. Later, he was accused of "unlawfully preparing an explosive device" and "of a terrorist act". The video footage released later clearly shows that the Russian occupants searched his garage alone while Mr. Prykhodko was forced to stand outside watching from a distance. Planting so-called "evidences" in the homes of Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar activists remains a usual practice for the Russian agencies. This another politically motivated case with the use of trumped-up charges adds to the long list of Russia's repressive actions in the occupied Crimea. We strongly condemn this behaviour and request the Russian side to stop expanding the list of Ukrainian political prisoners and to release all of them, including recently detained Mr. Prykhodko.

We again urge the Russian Federation to reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea and to stop its aggression against Ukraine, 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.