



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

PC.DEL/120/18
2 February 2018

ENGLISH only

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 1174th meeting of the Permanent Council,
1 February 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

I wish to start by bringing to the attention of the Permanent Council that last Thursday the Ukrainian court in Luhansk region sentenced the Russian Army serviceman Viktor Ageyev to a prison term of 10 years on charges of participation in illegal armed formations and terrorism. As we informed before, this serviceman was captured on 24 June 2017 as he was engaged in a subversive operation on the territory of Ukraine. He immediately admitted his belonging to the Russian Armed Forces, although, as usual, it was denied by the Russian Defence Ministry. This individual is one of the thousands of the Russian nationals who had been recruited and used by the Russian authorities to advance invasion of the Ukrainian territory. In particular, the competent authorities of Ukraine have established the identities of over two thousand Russian nationals – members of the Russian private military company called “The Vagner group” who fought in Donbas alongside Russian regular troops against Ukraine’s authorities and forces. Notably, few years ago the Russian president expressed his view on the private military companies as “the instrument of realization of national interests without direct participation of the state”. It fully fits with the Russian concept of hybrid warfare. We have established the identities of the officers of the Russian armed forces who command and control the two Army Corps established by the Russians in the territory under their occupation in Donbas.

Unfortunately, Moscow uses its control over the occupied territories for further violence, instead of stopping it and ceasing the supplies of manpower, weapons and ammunition to its armed formations deployed there. The SMM reports register that the invasion force maintains what can be described as the controlled escalation tactics, when the Russian armed formations constantly increase and decrease the numbers of ceasefire violations along the contact line. In the last 24 hours, 1 Ukrainian serviceman was killed and 2 were wounded. The security situation in Donbas continues to be volatile and unpredictable. Consistent with previous attempts, the Russian armed formations again targeted the building at the Donetsk Filtration Station where the SMM camera is installed, as registered in the SMM report of

30 January. Aiming to disable this camera which continuously registers the weapons' fire initiated from the positions of the Russian armed formations, the Russians entirely disregard the potential catastrophic ecological consequences of their attacks.

As observed on some individual days, the ceasefire can be maintained if Russia is willing so. What is also observed is the absence of political will on the part of Russia to establish a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire – a number one paragraph in all of the Minsk documents, co-signed by the Russian Federation as a party to the conflict.

Distinguished colleagues,

Over the last two day the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Minister Angelino Alfano was in Ukraine visiting Kyiv and the east of the country. We highly appreciate the priority attention attached by the Italian Chairmanship to the resolution of the conflict started by Russia as the key challenge to the rules-based security order, rooted in the OSCE principles and commitments. Apart from violence, we continue to witness Russia's multi-faceted measures of creeping integration of the occupied territory of Ukraine into the military, economic and information space of the Russian Federation. These are the templates probed by Moscow before on Russia-occupied parts of the sovereign territory of Georgia. Most recently, the SMM confirmed the media reports on the instructions given by the Russian occupation administration to “those working for so-called “public institutions” in Donetsk to give “pre-notification of trips to government-controlled areas”. Given the lawlessness and disregard for human rights and freedoms in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas, such orders foster the atmosphere of fear and significantly restrict the ability to travel freely across the contact line. Effectively, the Russian occupation administration imposes upon the people the only “allowed” destination to the Russian Federation. Having eliminated the right to freedom of assembly and expression, the occupation administration maintains the ban on contacts of the medical staff with the SMM patrols, as was most recently reported by the OSCE monitors from a hospital in Luhansk city and an orphanage in Sorokyne.

The Russian armed formations and occupation administration deny basic services to the local population. This unacceptable behavior, reported earlier to the Permanent Council by the Ukrainian Delegation, was conspicuously registered by the SMM in its weekly report of 24 January: the militants from Donetsk have “only approved one out of 44 requests for security guarantees for repair works between 30 December 2017 and the end of the reporting period”, resulting “in longstanding delays for critical repair work such as to the Novhorodske phenol sludge reservoir, the Donetsk-Horlivka pipeline (near Pivdenne) and a pipeline in Maiorsk.” After the disruption of Vodafone mobile telecommunications services, since 15 January the occupation administration in Donetsk has not granted a request for security guarantees to undertake the necessary repair works. Moreover, this week they suggested that the mobile traffic be re-established through the territory of the Russian Federation. In the meantime, the SMM registered the queues in the Donetsk city outside a “Phoenix” phone shop, an operator controlled by the Russian occupation administration.

Having temporarily occupied by force parts of territory of Ukraine, the Russian Federation flagrantly flouts respective obligations concerning civilian population under applicable international law.

Mr. Chairman,

To effectively accomplish its mandate, the SMM must have full and unrestricted freedom of movement and access in areas of Donbas, controlled by the Russian occupation administration. The Russian armed formations consistently deny it. The SMM weekly report of 24 January has again registered the unchanging trend of overwhelming majority (6 out of 7) of non-mine related restrictions in the non-government-controlled areas. The SMM has once again been denied access to the so called “humanitarian convoy” sent last week to Donbas by the Russian Federation in violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and the principles of international humanitarian law. The SMM patrol, which attempted to follow the convoy, was stopped by the armed men who closed the gate to a compound in front of the SMM vehicles. In the meantime, the Ukrainian competent authorities have established that the so called “humanitarian convoy” contained technical equipment of military designation for reconnaissance and communication. Also telling in this regard is the SMM daily report of 30 January about denial of access to two separate compounds in the Luhansk city and the order “to leave the area immediately”.

The Russian armed formations continue to intimidate unarmed civilian monitors of the SMM. On 27 January, two Russian fighters approached the SMM patrol with the safety catches of their assault rifles disengaged and demanded that the SMM leave the area.

We call upon Russia to assume responsibility, to lift restrictions, imposed on the SMM and put an end to any form of intimidation or harassment of the SMM monitors.

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of Ukraine, along with other delegations, regularly informs the Permanent Council on the glaring violations of human rights and freedoms and OSCE human dimension commitments in the temporarily occupied Crimea. However, the Russian occupation authorities persist in persecution and oppression, silencing any dissenting voices, in particular, by targeting ungrounded searches at the houses of pro-Ukrainian civil activists, Crimean Tatars, lawyers, and independent journalists.

On 27 January in Sudak, the Russian occupation police and security services disrupted the meeting of “Crimean Solidarity” – a peaceful meeting of families of political prisoners, lawyers and human rights defenders. Resorting to practices of the Soviet totalitarian regime, the Russian authorities invent untenable pretexts to intimidate members of families of political prisoners and prevent lawyers from performing their duties.

We condemn the oppression, perpetrated by the Russian occupation authorities in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, urge the Russian

Federation to respect human rights and applicable international humanitarian law, and to allow international presence and permanent human rights monitoring, including by the OSCE and its autonomous Institutions. We call upon Russia to immediately release all Ukrainian citizens who have been detained on fabricated charges and thrown into jail in the temporarily occupied Crimea and on the territory of the Russian Federation, among them Oleg Sentsov, Oleksandr Kolchenko and others.

We again urge Russia to reverse the illegal occupation of Crimea and Sevastopol, and to stop its aggression against Ukraine, including by withdrawing its armed formations from the Ukrainian territory and fully implementing its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.