



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 Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1300th meeting of the Permanent Council
28 January 2021

Madam Chairperson,

The most recent remarks delivered by the Russian delegation to the last meeting of the Permanent Council demonstrate that Russia's intention to continue its armed aggression against Ukraine remains unchanged. By denying its role as occupying Power in Crimea and parts of Donbas, as well as party to the conflict within the "Normandie Four" and TCG consultations, Russia pursues its attempts to mislead and intimidate the international community.

The ungrounded accusations directed last week by the Russian delegation at the Swedish Chairpersonship-in-Office are unacceptable. There is a clear consensus within the OSCE on the necessity to adhere to the Helsinki Final Act and its core principles, such as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, inviolability of frontiers and refraining from the threat or use of force. Thus, there is not a single reason to speak about so-called "violations" of the Porto MC Decision on the role of the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office or the PC Decision No. 485 on the OSCE statements and public information, to which the Russian delegation referred in its statement.

The Ukrainian side proceeds from the fact that 57 participating States, by choosing annually acting Chairpersonship by consensus, place their hopes and expectations on the Chairpersonship to safeguard the OSCE core principles as a pillar of the security cooperation from Vancouver to Vladivostok. That is why Ukraine supports activities by the OSCE Chairpersonship directed at drawing attention to these fundamental principles, which had been flagrantly violated by one of the OSCE participating States in 2008 through occupation of parts of Georgia's territory and in 2014 through attempted annexation of Ukraine's Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, as well as the ongoing armed aggression in Donbas.

Ukraine has already expressed its full support to the Programme of the Swedish Chairpersonship in the OSCE and its resolve to facilitate settlement of the key security challenges including cessation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

We remind the Russian delegation that Russia, as a participating State, undertook its commitment to adhere to the OSCE core principles. We urge the Russian side to pay due attention to long overdue implementation of these

commitments instead of delivering false narratives to the participating States and bullying the Chairpersonship-in-Office. Crimea is Ukraine. This will not be changed either by illegal occupation, or by Russia's statements in the international arena.

The recent developments on the ground prove that Russia's willingness to maintain and fuel the armed hostilities is only growing. Since the last meeting of the Permanent Council, one Ukrainian serviceman was killed by sniper fire at the line of contact in Donbas on 21 January, and two were heavily wounded on 25 and 26 January. The number of ceasefire violations by the Russian armed formations, including with the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons such as 120mm mortars, has significantly grown. On 23 January, the SMM reported the highest number of ceasefire violations in one day since 27 July 2020. We fully share the Mission's assessment that this spike shows that the security situation in areas along the contact line can deteriorate suddenly. Last week, the SMM spotted 50 weapons in violation of withdrawal lines, all of them in Russia-occupied areas.

It is no wonder that the general security situation in the conflict zone as well as issues concerning the functioning of the co-ordination mechanism for responding to ceasefire violations were in the focus of the most recent TCG Security Working Group meeting, as reported by Special Representative Heidi Grau after the TCG meeting on 21 January. We call on the Russian side to reverse immediately this negative trend.

We also urge Russia to unblock other issues, progress in which has been stalled for many months only due to the lack of political will by Kremlin, most notably mutual release of detainees and opening of Zolote and Shchastia entry-exit checkpoints. We join the call by Heidi Grau to demonstrate the political will to swiftly reach an agreement on the mutual release of detainees based on the principle "all for all", starting with "all confirmed for all confirmed". The Ukrainian side is ready to continue this process without any prior preconditions, within the established formats, that is "Normandie Four" and TCG.

Activities of the OSCE SMM, deployed to Ukraine with the aim of contributing to reducing tensions and fostering peace, stability and security on the ground, remain severely restricted by the Russian occupiers. The Mission's safe and secure access throughout Ukraine are only on paper, as the Russian side continues to violate its mandate by denying access to Crimea and impeding monitoring in the temporarily occupied parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. As participating States enter negotiations on the next annual budget of the SMM, we call to pay particular attention to strengthening the Mission's technical capacities, able to compensate at least partially the restrictions imposed by the Russian side.

As neither Ukrainian government, nor the international community including OSCE have direct access to the temporarily occupied Crimean peninsula, we continue to rely upon the evidences and data collected by the NGOs. Let me quote in this regard some of the findings provided by the "Crimean Tatar Resource Center" for the human rights violations in the occupied Crimea throughout 2020. They include 52 searches, 280 cases of arrests, 92 interrogations, 424 cases of violations of the right to a fair trial, and 77 cases of transferring political prisoners from Crimea to the territory of the Russian Federation. 16 Ukrainian citizens were illegally sentenced by the occupation courts to terms of imprisonment up to 19 years. The COVID-19 pandemic has only deteriorated the situation for the

persecuted people, as the occupation authorities used it for denying access to defenders, undermining publicity and concealing the violations that took place during the fabrication of the so-called “cases”. Such behaviour by the occupying Power can only testify to its resolve to further silence the dissenting voices. This must be stopped, and we count on the consistent support by the participating States.

We, again, urge the Russian Federation to reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea, militarization of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, and to stop its aggression against Ukraine, including by withdrawing its armed formations, mercenaries and their hardware from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and fully implementing its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.