



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 1313rd meeting of the Permanent Council
13 May 2021

Madam Chairperson,

Last week, in the FSC meeting, the Russian delegation stated that the discussion on the issue of Russian troops on the border with Ukraine, I quote, "has been completely exhausted".

This is not the case. Several thousand Russian servicemen have indeed returned from their military exercises in the temporarily occupied Crimean peninsula to the territory of the Russian Federation. At the same time, the number of Russian troops additionally sent to the border with Ukraine and to the occupied parts of Donbas has not significantly changed.

Thus, Ukraine has all legal and legitimate rights to demand from Russia fulfilment of its OSCE commitments on military transparency. Along with other participating States, we again urge Russia to uphold its obligations, in particular under the Vienna Document 2011.

The military threat, which the Russian Federation continues to present for Ukraine, is clearly visible from the recent SMM reports. Last week, the Mission registered twofold increase of ceasefire violations along the line of contact. The number of Minsk-proscribed weapons has surged from 11 to 142, all of them but two in the Russia-occupied areas. The number of heavy weapons outside designated storage sites has also grown, from 45 to 256, 95% of which, again, in the Russia-occupied parts of Donbas. This was followed by the increased use of Minsk-proscribed weapons, from 21 to 55 instances. Ukraine's servicemen continue to suffer losses: for instance, two of them were killed in one single day of 6 May.

The numbers speak for themselves: it is definitely not Ukraine, who prepares for the so-called "scenario involving the use of force", to which the Russian delegation refers so often in its statements to the PC.

Russia's military provocations are accompanied with intensive propaganda and militarization of the population living under the temporary occupation. In Donetsk and Luhansk, the SMM observed military-style parades of members of the Russian armed formations with the weapons in violation of the withdrawal lines and military-type vehicles. In Crimea, militarist mass events were held under the pretext of 9 May, with propaganda on conscription to the Russian army, including with the involvement of children, which is strongly prohibited by the international humanitarian law.

I wish also to refer to another fake, regularly delivered by the Russian delegation to the PC meetings. The Minsk agreements, including the Minsk Package

of Measures, do not have even a single reference to, I quote, “Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk as parties to the conflict”, end of quote, which is falsely stated by Russia. At the same time, they refer to Russia as a member of the TCG, along with Ukraine and OSCE. We thank Germany and France for regular reminders of this fact to Russia, which has to fulfil the commitments it had undertaken by signing all Minsk agreements.

We join the calls by OSCE participating States and urge Russia to take constructive stance within the TCG. This is urgently needed in particular to enhance safety of the civilian population living in the conflict zone. For instance, Russia’s unwillingness to proceed with updated demining plans leads to further civilian casualties due to mines, unexploded ordnance and other explosive devices, the number of which in 2021, according to the SMM data, reached 14.

It is notable that the Russian leadership doesn’t even try to hide its control of the illegal armed formations operating in the occupied parts of Donbas. On 10 May, Russia’s ruling party “United Russia” signed an agreement with the “Union of Donbas volunteers”, with a view to cooperation at the forthcoming elections in the Russian Federation.

It was announced in particular that the owners of the Russian passports, issued in the certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, would be able to take part in those elections, which, as we understand, would be critical for the “United Russia” party rapidly losing support among the Russian population. As noted by the MFA of Ukraine on 12 May, such actions by the Russian side undermine politico-diplomatic resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict and contradict Russia’s commitments within the Minsk agreements and “Normandie Four” arrangements.

The Russian Federation keeps violating its international obligations in the temporarily occupied Crimea as well. I have already referred to the illegal conscription campaign in my statement. As reported by the “Crimean Human Rights Group” NGO, those Crimean residents who deny service in the Armed Forces of occupying Power, continue to be persecuted: in April 2021, additional three criminal cases were opened and seven people sentenced.

The same NGO refers to new administrative proceedings by the occupation administration against religious organizations and their members, three cases only last month. We remind the Russian side of its commitments under the international law and within the OSCE, and urge it to stop those persecutions.

Overall, in the last 4 years since 2017 to 2020, as reported by another NGO “Crimean Tatar Resource Center”, almost five thousand major human rights violations took place in Crimea, with majority of them related to violations of the right to a fair trial, illegal detentions, arrests and interrogations. This magnitude of human rights violations cannot be left without proper attention and reaction by the OSCE, its institutions and structures. We remind that the SMM must be allowed, according to its mandate, to access entire territory of Ukraine including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

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.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson.