



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 1296th meeting of the Permanent Council
17 December 2020

Mr. Chairperson,

Last Thursday, on 10 December, while we were listening to yet another list of accusations and manipulations by the Russian delegation against Ukraine, Deputy Chairman of the Duma of the Russian Federation, the Head of the Russian Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. Piotr Tolstoi, called Ukraine a part of Russia. Let me quote him: "We discuss here the problems of Ukraine, because this is a part of Russia. We discuss the problems of Ukraine because they are the same Russian people, who were subjected to some kind of experiment, which was finalized for them, but failed for us", end of quote.

This statement reveals the essence of Russia's aggressive actions against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine: the Russian leadership simply does not take Ukraine as a separate sovereign country. What we have been witnessing in the last almost seven years in Crimea and Donbas, is the direct result of this attitude.

This is also the reason for the lack of progress in negotiations within the Normandie Format and the TCG: the Russian side has simply no interest to end the conflict, unless Ukraine capitulates fully to Kremlin's demands.

Although the year 2020 brought such positive developments as renewed ceasefire since July and a round of mutual release of detainees in April, other provisions of the Minsk agreements remain largely unimplemented by the Russian side, week after week.

Let me draw your attention to several facts provided by the OSCE SMM in its most recent weekly report of 15 December.

42 weapons were spotted by the Mission in violation of their withdrawal lines, all of them in Russia-occupied areas of both Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

89 weapons were registered outside designated storage sites, all of them in the same areas.

The SMM freedom of movement was restricted on four occasions, again, all of them in the parts of Donbas, temporarily occupied by Russia.

The SMM mini-UAV spotted for the first time a 320m-long trench, assessed as firing positions, facing in a north-westerly direction towards positions of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, as well as another trench with a square pit, assessed as a mortar pit, about 20m east of the above trench and 1.5km south-east of the Donetsk Filtration Station. Both trenches, I quote, "were assessed as belonging to

the armed formations and not seen in imagery from September 2020”, end of quote.

On 8 December, near Russia-occupied Ternove, the SMM spotted “2B26 Grad” multiple launch rocket system, which entered service in the Russian army in 2012. This is another example of the modern weapon system, which has never been in use of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and which could be delivered to the occupied parts of Donbas only by Russia. The image of this weapon is available in the Annex 1 of the SMM weekly report. We thank the Mission for its continued work to provide evidences of Russia’s illegal military activities in the occupied areas of Ukraine.

Even the ceasefire, which has largely been holding in Donbas since July, remains very fragile. As confirmed by Chief Monitor Cevik on 14 December during the informal briefing, the numbers of its violations are gradually increasing. This assessment is fully in line with the data provided by the Ukrainian militaries: only on 15 December, they registered 11 cases of ceasefire violations in different locations. No response fire followed, as the Ukrainian side spares no effort to fulfil its part of commitments, both in security and other tracks of the Minsk agreements.

This was demonstrated, in particular, on 15 December, when the Ukrainian Parliament has once again prolonged the term of applicability of the “Law on the peculiarities of local self-government in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions” for another year, till 31 December 2021.

We regret that Ukraine’s resolve is not matched by a similar political will of the Russian Federation. The most recent TCG meeting on 15–16 December has again ended without the tangible results. We strongly believe that the progress on the ground, that is demining, new disengagement areas, opening of EECPS, and the next round of mutual release of detainees, must not depend on the issues discussed in the political Working Group of the TCG.

Keeping Russia at the negotiating table and pushing it towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict it had initiated and continues to fuel, requires a resolute coordinated stance by the international community. In this vein, we welcome the recent political decision of the European Council to extend economic and sectoral sanctions against Russia for the next six months.

The policy of non-recognition and restrictive measures in response to violations of Ukraine’s sovereignty and international law must remain in place, to demonstrate the aggressor State that its actions are not ignored.

On 14 December, the Russian occupation administration in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea illegally sold for peanuts the Ukrainian “Masandra” Concern to a subsidiary company of “Rossiya” Bank, controlled by Mr. Yurii Kovalchuk, one of the friends of President Putin. The seizure by Russia of Ukrainian enterprises left in the occupied parts of Ukraine is legally void. Russia must be held accountable.

On 14 December, the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court published its Report on Preliminary Examination Activities in 2020, in which it, in particular, found a reasonable basis to believe that, from 26 February 2014 onwards, in the period leading up to, and/or in the context of the occupation of the territory of Crimea, the following crimes were committed: willful killing; torture; outrages upon personal dignity; unlawful confinement; compelling protected persons to serve in the forces of a hostile Power; wilfully depriving protected persons of the rights of fair and regular trial; the transfer of parts of the population of the occupied territory outside this territory; seizing the enemy’s property that is not imperatively demanded by the necessities of war.

Although the Russian Federation has never ratified the ICC Statute after signing it in 2000, and withdrew from the process of joining it in 2016, the findings by the ICC add to a huge number of violations of the international law, which were registered in relation to Russia's temporary occupation of Crimea.

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.

As a final remark of today's statement, let me thank you, Mr. Chairperson, and your entire team for maintaining focused attention to the topic of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict throughout the year of Albania's Chairpersonship in the OSCE. We look forward to continue these efforts with the incoming Swedish Chairpersonship.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.