



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 1257th meeting of the Permanent Council,
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Mr. Chairperson,

I wish to start by responding to the numerous calls by the Russian delegation to discuss the issue of the conflict under the joint current issue for all delegations taking part in the discussions, with the title provided by the Russian side. This is a part of Russia's sustained efforts for almost six years to deny its responsibility as a country, which started illegal armed aggression against its neighbour without the formal declaration of war. This entire period of time, the Russian side remained isolated, both in this hall and in many other international fora, with its futile attempts to impose its own flawed vision of the conflict, its root causes, sides and prospects for a settlement. It is no wonder that many of the statements to the meetings of the Permanent Council, the Russian delegation starts with the words, I quote, "and now I will tell you on the real situation in Ukraine". It is due to the fact that the alternate reality imposed by Russia has nothing to do with the truth. None of the delegations speaking in this hall supports the Russian Federation in these efforts by speaking under the current issue it raises. We are aware of frustration of the Russian side in connection with this fact, and underscore that the only plausible way forward to end Russia's diplomatic isolation is to withdraw Russian forces from the occupied parts of Ukraine's territory and to end, after all, the ongoing conflict, which brings no benefits to Russia as well.

First, and most important, we expect the Russian side and its illegal armed formations in Donbas to cease fire, which continues until now, including with the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons, despite all commitments undertaken by Russia. Moreover, the number of ceasefire violations is steadily increasing, causing further losses of human lives and damage to infrastructure. We reject Russia's efforts to demonstrate its fake non-involvement into the developments on the ground by claiming the absence of the regular Russian troops in Donbas. The militants, who

fight along the contact line, are led, trained, equipped, financed and fully controlled by Russia. Albeit without formal Russian military insignia, these people are members of the Russian armed formations, deployed and used by Russia to attack Ukraine. Their military provocations are supported by the heavy weapons supplied by Russia. A month ago, during his press-conference, Russia's President Vladimir Putin, responding to the question on the presence of tanks and heavy artillery in certain areas of Donbas, said, I quote: "Where do they get it from? Probably, from the countries which sympathize with them". There is no need to remind that the only country doing that and having common border with those parts of Ukraine, is the Russian Federation.

In the last two weeks, the SMM reported on 73 weapons in violation of their respective withdrawal lines, all but 11 in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas, as well as 92 weapons outside of designated storage sites, all of them in the same Russia-occupied territories. Mission's freedom of movement was restricted in the same period on 56 occasions, all in areas held by the Russian armed formations. Keep these figures in mind when in half an hour the Russian delegation will start delivering its traditional unfounded accusation against Ukraine on the current security and humanitarian situation in Donbas.

We share concerns raised by the Special Monitoring Mission on its inability to reach camera close to the disengagement area near Petrivske, as the Russian proxies continue denying access of the SMM patrols to it. In the last PC meeting, we drew attention of participating States to the ongoing violations of the agreements on the existing disengagement areas, in particular to the persons in military-style clothing spotted by the SMM near the former positions of the Russian armed formations inside the Petrivske DA. Thus, this became another part of Russia's systematic campaign of "blinding" SMM to prevent it from reporting on Russia's violations of its commitments. We reiterate our strong condemnation of such behaviour and urge the Russian delegation to stop this campaign and to allow the SMM fulfil its monitoring mandate.

Findings of the SMM continue to be a valuable source of verified information, which even the Russian side cannot call into question. We thank the Mission for its reports on persecutions of drivers of the cars with Ukrainian licence plates regularly stopped and "fined" by members of the Russian armed formations. This represents another violation of Ukraine's sovereignty by the Russian occupation forces, following previous recognition of the fake "documents" issued by Russian proxies, expedited issuance of the Russian passports by Russia, introduction of the Russian currency, legislation and tax system in the occupied parts of Donbas, and many others.

We condemn the fact that the SMM is denied possibility to monitor and report on such violations of Ukraine's sovereignty in Crimea, as the Russian Federation continues preventing the SMM access to the occupied Crimean peninsula. Under these circumstances, we have to rely upon the information gathered by independent NGOs and human right defenders. Let me quote in this regard some findings provided by the Crimean Human Rights Group as a result of its monitoring in 2019. Last year, 26 administrative cases against various religious organizations and their members, including Muslims, Protestants, Baptists, Jews, Scientologists, and

Krishnaites, were opened in Crimea, based on the claims that their religious ceremonies had been carried out “outside premises or in the premises not registered as cult structures according to the laws of the Russian Federation”. 36 criminal cases were opened by the Russian occupation authorities against residents of Crimea for evading military service in the Russian Armed Forces, in flagrant violation of the norms of international humanitarian law clearly prohibiting occupying Power to compel protected persons to serve in its armed or auxiliary forces. Ukrainian mass media including radio and TV channels, print media and major web-sites remain unavailable for Crimean residents, leaving them vulnerable to propaganda led by the Russian state-controlled media. Independent journalists and bloggers are persecuted, illegally detained, and denied access to Crimea. We condemn these violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the Russian occupation authorities and reiterate our consistent position on the need for the OSCE and its assets to remain seized of this matter.

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 from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and fully implementing its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.