

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Pavlo Klimkin,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine,
at the 25th Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the OSCE
(Milan, 6 December 2018)**

**Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I wish to start by thanking Chairperson-in-Office, Italy's Foreign Minister and my dear colleague Enzo Moavero Milanesi for his warm hospitality at this Ministerial Council in beautiful Milano.

I also thank the Italian OSCE Chairmanship team for their tireless work throughout the year to enhance the impact of the OSCE in addressing key security challenges.

This is the fifth consecutive Ministerial Council when the OSCE agenda has been dominated by the Russian destabilizing behaviour as a major threat to European security.

This year Russia did not pull back, but expanded its aggressive course of action to the Sea of Azov, the Black Sea and the Kerch Strait.

As you know, on 25 November the Russian Navy deliberately used military force against three Ukrainian vessels in international waters in the Black Sea. 24 Ukrainian sailors have been captured and are now prisoners of war. Neither the ICRC, nor Ukraine has been given access to them. Together we must strongly demand from Russia their immediate release and safe return to Ukraine.

I remind that attack of armed forces of one state on armed forces of another state constitutes an act of aggression, in accordance with 1974 UN GA resolution.

It is a matter of urgency to provide prompt and consolidated international response to this act of aggression. Declarations are not enough, there must be action.

Russia's aggression against the neighbouring Ukraine has already killed and wounded over 30 thousand people.

Russia has turned Crimea into a military base, and growing militarization of the occupied peninsula undermines the stability of the broader Black Sea and Mediterranean regions.

Given far-reaching negative implications of these developments, Ukraine together with 29 states submitted a draft resolution "The problem of militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov" to the UN General Assembly. We count on your countries' support for this resolution.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine cannot be viewed in isolation from other parts of the OSCE space.

Russia sows instability in the OSCE countries by interfering in the democratic elections in the US and Europe, lending political and financial support to ultra-right and ultra-left movements, generating fakes on an industrial scale and upgrading its propaganda instruments. Russia used military grade nerve agent, banned by international law. The scope of Russia's clear, gross and uncorrected violations of the OSCE principles and commitments is massive and continues to grow.

What does it mean for all of us and the OSCE? It means instability and insecurity. Ukraine sees the following as crucial elements for countering Russia's assault:

- to maintain unity and solidarity in defending the founding OSCE principles by increasing the cost for Russia, including with comprehensive and tailored sanctions. Illegal occupation and attempted annexation must never be accepted as "a compromise" with the aggressor;

- there can be no "business as usual" or what is now offered by some as "a positive unifying agenda" diverting attention from the blatant breach of the founding OSCE principles. Instead, we can maintain a critical dialogue with Russia, focusing it on issues of critical significance for the rules-based security order;

- to act with resolve in defending human rights and fundamental freedoms and preventing the transformation of temporarily occupied territories into human rights "grey zones".

Mr. Chairman,

We highly value the dedication and courage of the SMM monitors operating under constant threat from the Russia-led military forces in the occupied Donbas. By denying to the SMM the possibility to perform its mandate, including at the Ukrainian-Russian border, by destroying the SMM's assets, Russia denies establishment of security conditions, necessary for progress on political track of the conflict resolution.

Russia bans SMM's access to the Crimean peninsula, where the occupation authorities continue to persecute and oppress Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians and all those who oppose the illegal occupation of the peninsula. As we speak, the Russian occupation authorities are detaining and questioning Emil Kurbedinov, a Crimean Tatar lawyer, who defended Ukrainian political prisoners on the peninsula. It is not the first time that Russians attack lawyers and human rights defenders. My call on Russia – stop persecuting our people!

Against the backdrop of the present threats to security environment and Russia's revisionism and territorial expansionism, the OSCE should focus on its core mandate – conflict prevention and resolution.

Peaceful resolution of the protracted conflicts on the territories of Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Republic of Azerbaijan with full respect for their sovereignty and territorial integrity within the internationally recognized borders should be our common objective. Ukraine, as a mediator and guarantor, will continue to facilitate resolution of the

Transdniestrian conflict in strict compliance with OSCE principles and norms of international law.

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE remains an important platform for elaborating our common responses to the numerous challenges in all three dimensions of our common security.

I wish the incoming Slovak OSCE Chairmanship, my dear friend Foreign Minister Lajčák, every success in guiding our common efforts through this challenging environment. You may count on Ukraine as a staunch supporter.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.