



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 1248th meeting of the Permanent Council,
21 November 2019

Mr. Chairperson,

Today, on 21 November, Ukraine marks the anniversary of the national Day of Dignity and Freedom. President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy emphasized in his statement on this occasion that this day is special for Ukrainian citizens. I quote: "It is related to the beginning of two revolutions, when the voices of millions of citizens merged into a single voice of the nation to say firmly: Ukrainians want and will live in a free, democratic and prosperous state. Dignity and freedom are essential components of our DNA". End of quote.

We regret and condemn the fact that our neighbour, the Russian Federation, reacted to these aspirations of the Ukrainian people with hybrid warfare, armed attacks and occupation of parts of Ukraine's territory. The OSCE core principles and norms of international law were flagrantly violated.

It is in the interest of all participating States that a country violating the norms of international law is brought to justice, even if it denies any wrongdoing and involvement into the illegal actions.

On 18 November, three Ukrainian warships, illegally captured a year ago by Russia in the Black Sea, were finally handed over by Russia back to the Ukrainian authorities. According to the Order of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea of 25 May 2019, Russia was obliged to immediately return these vessels to the custody of Ukraine. It took Russians almost half a year for such a return. After careful checking and examination, it will become clear in what condition Ukrainian ships were returned, whether their equipment and documentation have been removed. Despite the release of crewmembers and vessels, the dispute is still ongoing, arbitration tribunal has been constituted and already on 21-22 November in The Hague the first procedural hearings will be held, on which the following procedural issues of case consideration will be determined.

Every week, the Russian delegation in this hall speaks on the necessity to implement the Minsk agreements. Every week, we continue to observe the ongoing violations of ceasefire, military provocations by the Russian armed formations, casualties of Ukrainian

citizens, and lack of progress in withdrawal of the Minsk-proscribed weapons from the line of contact.

Even in those fields, in which some progress has been achieved, Russia's policy of controlled escalation and fuelling violence remains in place. On 15 and 16 November, the Russian proxies fired Ukrainian military positions close to the Petrivske disengagement area, including with the use of mortars. Russia's intention was to provoke retaliatory fire and to use it, as usual, for propaganda purposes to blame Ukraine for violating the completed disengagement in the respective disengagement area. We strongly condemn these provocations.

The Ukrainian side continues dismantling fortified positions within the pilot disengagement areas in the Zolote and Petrivske, as confirmed by the SMM reports. The renovated bridge near Stanytsia Luhanska has become operational, facilitating crossings of the line of contact for dozens of thousands of civilians. At the administrative boundary line with Russia-occupied Crimea, the Ukrainian authorities completed construction works at the Chonhar and Kalanchak entry-exit checkpoints, which now have new administrative buildings and facilities. The Ukrainian government remains committed to maintaining contacts with the Ukrainian citizens forced to live under Russia's temporary occupation.

The Russian Federation continues issuing Russian passports to the residents of the occupied parts of Donbas. This process is aimed at strengthening Russia's positions in the territories of Ukraine it occupies, which further complicates resolution of the conflict and future reintegration of those territories. According to the Russian official data, more than 170 thousand Russian passports were issued to the residents of the occupied parts Donbas since the end of April 2019, when President Putin signed the decree on the simplified procedures of their issuance. We thank the OSCE participating States, which expressed their clear position of condemnation and non-recognition of those passports.

In Crimea, the Russian occupation authorities continue persecuting Crimean Tatars under the fabricated cases. Following last week's illegal sentences given to six Crimean residents, who were left behind bars for up to 19 years, eight more Crimean Tatars now face the same absurd allegations. The ongoing lawlessness and campaign of intimidation by the Kremlin regime should remain in a spotlight of the OSCE and its executive structures. The Russian Federation must stop expanding the list of political prisoners. I remind the Russian delegation that the imposition of laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Crimea by the Russian Federation is unlawful, as Russia must respect its obligations under international law with regard to respecting the laws in force in Crimea prior to occupation.

We again urge the Russian Federation to reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea 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.