



**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 1286<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council  
22 October 2020

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Every week, we listen to the statements delivered by the Russian delegation in this hall, in which the Russian side tries to blame Ukraine for the so-called non-implementation of the political provisions of the Minsk agreements. Yet, in fact, it is the Russian side that continues to block the work of the Political working group of the TCG for almost three months already, obstructing virtually all discussions on practical issues on its agenda and preventing implementation of the respective provisions of the Common Agreed Conclusions of the 2019 "Normandie" summit in Paris. During previous PC meetings, I informed you in detail about the real state of affairs in the Trilateral Contact Group.

I also wish to remind that all three basic Minsk documents (the Minsk Protocol, the Minsk Memorandum and the Package of Measures) start from a number of specific security provisions, which must be fulfilled to enable us to move forward.

Let us examine these provisions together.

First, immediate and comprehensive ceasefire. Relative calm along the line of contact, as confirmed by the SMM reports, remains more or less in place for almost three months already. But it is only relative. Ukrainian troops exercise maximum restraint and do their best to preserve the ceasefire by not responding to daily provocations by the Russian armed formations. But these provocations and, at times, targeted shootings at Ukrainian positions do continue. Just a few days ago, on 20 October, one Ukrainian serviceman received combat injuries as a result of targeted shooting. Yesterday, at around 5pm, a group of 20 to 30 armed men crossed the contact line in the vicinity of the Nyzhnioteple settlement in the Luhansk region, approached an observation post of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and started targeted shooting. Our servicemen had to open fire to defend themselves and finally dispersed the attackers. Unfortunately, this is a sad reality.

Second, adherence to the line of contact as of 19 September 2014, the day when the Minsk Memorandum was signed. As it turned out, Russia never

intended to honour it. To find out the truth, you may ask residents of the town of Debaltseve, who have been living under Russia's occupation since February 2015, on how this provision was implemented by the Russian side.

Third, withdrawal of all heavy weapons. In the last two weeks, the SMM reported 95 weapons in violation of their withdrawal lines, 89 of which in the Russia-occupied areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.

Fourth, effective monitoring and verification of the ceasefire regime and the withdrawal of heavy weapons by the OSCE. We all know from the SMM reports, what restrictions and impediments the SMM faces on a daily basis in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas, especially in the areas adjacent to the state border.

In these conditions, it is really astonishing how stubbornly the Russian side demands Ukraine to proceed with fulfilment of the political part of the Minsk agreements. This remarkable alacrity should be rather directed at implementation of Russia's own commitments, which it has undertaken by signing all Minsk agreements with Ukraine and the OSCE as a mediator between Russia and Ukraine.

We urge the Russian side to stop using various pretexts, on which we informed in the last meetings of the Permanent Council, and to unblock the constructive work of the TCG and its working groups.

Instead of delivering false accusations, the Russian side should rather take practical steps aimed at implementation of the agreed arrangements, including de-escalation of the security situation on the ground.

It could, for instance, return its officers to the Ukrainian-Russian bilateral body, JCCC, and end its almost three years long obstruction of this mechanism. Various members of the armed formations wearing armbands with the letters "JCCC" written on them, whom the SMM spots inside the disengagement areas on a daily basis, have no right whatsoever to replace Russian officers.

The Russian side could also stop its illegal supplies and military activities in the border area, which continue to fuel hostilities in Donbas. Last week, the SMM spotted four cargo trains and two convoys near the border with the Russian Federation.

This is only a tiny fraction of what is taking place on the ground. For instance, the real number of trains travelling through the uncontrolled segment of the border is much higher: at the Gukovo border crossing point alone, the OSCE Border Observer Mission counted 31 of them in one week. The Chervona Mohyla railway station in Voznesenivka, where the SMM spots trains regularly, most recently on the night of 13-14 October, is located just 6km from Gukovo. This is the same railway line.

On the evening of 16 October, an SMM long-range UAV spotted two convoys of military type trucks supplying unknown cargo from Russia across the border near Manych, where there are no border crossing facilities, to a compound in the centre of the Donetsk city. We urge the Russian delegation to provide explanations on the content of this cargo and the recipients of the delivery.

Russia's creeping integration of the occupied parts of Donbas continues unabated. The SMM reports confirm cancellation of Ukrainian language classes in schools located in those areas, as a part of Russia's policy of establishing Russian as the only official language. We thank the Mission for its findings and strongly condemn illegal actions by the Russian occupation administrations. Reports, provided by the international bodies, continue to serve as a stark reminder to the international community of the dire situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

In his address on 20 October to the Ukrainian Parliament, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy stressed that, I quote, "as long as Crimea remains occupied, and Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars are regularly persecuted, the world must not forget about Crimea", end of quote. In this vein, we remind the Russian side that the SMM mandate provides for full and safe access throughout Ukraine. The temporary occupation of Crimea does not alter its status as a part of Ukraine's sovereign territory. We demand that the Russian side ensure the safe and secure access of the SMM to the Crimean peninsula.

Recently, the subject of water supply to Crimea appeared again in the media.

Therefore, I feel obliged to state the following.

Ukraine did not block any natural watercourse or river carrying water to Crimea. Ukraine merely suspended the artificial water preference, previously provided to accelerate the economic and agricultural development of the peninsula.

Internal water resources of Crimea are sufficient to meet the water needs of the population of the peninsula even in the driest years. If the occupying power declares a lack of water resources for the population, we understand that the water resources are being diverted for other purposes, such as functioning of the military-industrial complex and bases.

Ukraine is not going to satisfy the Russian military-industrial complex' water needs.

According to international humanitarian law, the occupying state bears full responsibility for the situation in the temporarily occupied territory. Among other things, it concerns the matter of providing the population of the temporarily occupied territory with resources, including water.

The resumption of water supply to Crimea from mainland Ukraine is possible only after the peninsula's de-occupation.

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.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**