



**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 1307<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council  
25 March 2021

**Madam Chairperson,**

Eight months have passed since Ukraine and Russia agreed within the TCG, under the OSCE mediation, a number of additional measures to strengthen ceasefire in Donbas, in line with the Paris "Normandie" Summit Common Agreed Conclusions. This period, as confirmed by the SMM reports, has been marked by significantly reduced violence, casualties and damage to infrastructure. This hard-won achievement must not be reversed. We, again, urge the Russian side to stop its armed attacks along the contact line, which have in particular left three Ukrainian servicemen dead since the last meeting of the Permanent Council, and to return to a comprehensive ceasefire.

The need to ensure it was in a spotlight of the N4 political advisers online-conference held on 18 March. We regret that the Russian side rejected the proposal to hold an extraordinary meeting of the TCG Working Group on Security Issues, put forward by the Ukrainian side during that videoconference. Russia's stance clearly indicates its unwillingness to stick to the agreed measures on ceasefire. At the same time, we thank France and Germany for their constructive position as mediators demonstrated during the videoconference.

Regretfully, the ceasefire, even in its current form, remains effectively the only implemented measure to stabilize the situation in the conflict area, agreed in Paris more than a year ago. Progress on all the remaining provisions, including demining, additional disengagement areas and crossing points, release of detainees, ICRC access and SMM freedom of movement, continues to be blocked by the Russian side in the TCG. I will not elaborate on these issues, as they are widely discussed every week at the PC meetings. The main point is that for all those provisions, Ukraine did its part. It is long overdue for Russia to do the same.

Even fulfilment of the political provisions of the Paris Summit Conclusions and respective parts of the Minsk agreements remains stalled in the TCG for several months under artificial pretexts. Since August, the Russian participants in the TCG Political Working Group simply refuse to return to its regular agenda and resume consideration of the relevant working proposals, in particular relating to the legal aspects of the special order of local self-governance in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and incorporation of the so called "Steinmeier's formula" into the Ukrainian legislation. Paradoxically, these are exactly the documents that Russia was regularly insisting on before. But now it turns out that it has no genuine interest in reaching progress on that track too.

Russia's political statements that it supports reintegration of those Ukrainian territories remain only on paper. In practice, Kremlin continues integrating the occupied parts of Donbas into Russia's political, economic and military space. Now the time has come for electoral space: as Russia is preparing for the parliamentary elections in September this year, its leadership decided to use the population of the occupied Ukrainian territories for the electoral ends. We strongly condemn the recently announced decision of a Russian ruling party to open its representative office in the occupied parts of the Donbas region. We again urge the Russian side to respect Ukraine's sovereignty, and we underscore the illegal character of the ongoing so-called "passportization" and involvement of Ukrainian citizens into the electoral processes of a neighbour country.

We witness similar policy of imposing Russian citizenship in other temporarily occupied parts of Ukraine, that is the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Seven years after the beginning of occupation, Russia continues persecuting and punishing those residents of the Crimean peninsula who rejected Russia-imposed citizenship. Starting from 20 March 2021, all non-Russian citizens are banned from owning land plots in almost the entire peninsula, with the exception of several districts. We strongly condemn the relevant decree by the President of the Russian Federation as an illegal act by the occupying Power, which violates international humanitarian law. This forcible deprivation of property is legally null and void: after the de-occupation of Crimea, the rights of land owners violated by the occupying Power will be fully restored.

It is no secret that after the occupation, Putin's cronies and local so-called officials have stolen private enterprises and land plots in Crimea in pursuit of additional income. Russia's own model of governance, in which business success heavily depends on loyalty of its owner to the corrupt regime, was imposed to the occupied Crimea. We have already informed participating States on some of such cases, for instance last December on the illegal sale of the Ukrainian "Masandra" Concern to a subsidiary company of "Rossiya" Bank, controlled by Mr. Yuri Kovalchuk, one of those Putin's cronies.

On Tuesday 23 March, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy enacted the decision by the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine on restrictive measures against 26 foreigners and 81 legal entities, including a number of companies located in Crimea, in particular the abovementioned "Masandra" Concern. Thieves must not benefit from their actions. We call on participating States to stick to the policy of non-recognition of Russia's attempted annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, including through sanctions.

Until the de-occupation of Crimea takes place, the Ukrainian authorities continue supporting Ukrainian citizens forced to live under Russia's temporary occupation. On 23 March, President Zelenskyy signed the law, which would allow residents of Crimea to go to the courts located in Kherson region of Ukraine instead of doing that in Kyiv. This will significantly simplify access to justice for those residents.

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, Madam Chairperson.**