



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 1261st meeting of the Permanent Council,
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Mr. Chairperson,

Three months after the most recent Normandy Four Summit in Paris, we regret to state that none of its agreed conclusions has been implemented in full because of the destructive position of the Russian side.

Instead of a full and comprehensive implementation of the ceasefire, we observe the ongoing armed attacks and shellings by the Russian armed formations in Donbas, which only last week (24 February – 1 March) left two Ukrainian servicemen dead and 14 wounded. Civilians also continue to suffer: on 2 March, Krasnohorivka village was shelled from 120mm mortar, and a local resident was wounded. The Russian diplomacy complements these acts of violence by delivering its propaganda and fakes, including in this hall, as was the case last week with the attack near Zolote disengagement area on 18 February. In the same statement last week, the Russian delegation referred for instance to Holubivske village, which was damaged by fighting. Let me draw your attention in this context to the SMM daily report of 4 March, which informs on six members of the Russian armed formations in a residential area west of Holubivske, near the entrance of a civilian house, assessed as used by them, unloading construction materials. We strongly condemn the use of civilian infrastructure for military purposes by the Russian proxies, who regularly start fighting by delivering fire directly from the residential areas.

The Russian side neglects its commitments on demining. The SMM has again registered anti-personnel mines used by the Russian proxies, inside of Zolote disengagement area and near occupied Molodizhne, about 10m of the road regularly used by the SMM. Meanwhile, as reported by the SMM, Ukrainian deminers continue their activities, including in Katerynivka, in the same disengagement area.

Additional disengagement areas proposed by the Ukrainian delegation to the TCG are rejected by the Russian side, including Hnutove area located around the existing entry-exit checkpoint.

The work on release and exchange of conflict-related detainees continues: on 1 March, Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine Andriy Yermak had a meeting with Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation Dmitry Kozak to discuss this issue. The Ukrainian side noted the intention to conduct the next exchange track in March this year.

Instead of giving its consent to the opening of new entry-exit checkpoints along the contact line in Donbas, based primarily on humanitarian criteria, as was agreed in Paris, the Russian side fires at the existing EECs. On 29 February, Ukrainian armoured personnel carrier was hit while moving in the vicinity of Marinka EEC, at the moment when large numbers of civilians were crossing the contact line. The EEC was immediately closed for security reasons and reopened the next day. This situation has been covered by the SMM in its daily report of 2 March.

Safe and secure access of the SMM, which is a part of its mandate and N4 agreed conclusions, remains only on paper, if we speak about Russia-occupied parts of Donbas, in particular those adjacent to the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. In one day of 29 February, an SMM long-range UAV spotted recent vehicle tracks on dirt paths leading towards the border with the Russian Federation in four different areas near Novooleksandrivka, Shevchenko, Kozhevnia and Cheremshyne, where there are no border crossing facilities. Overall, in the last two weeks, the SMM reported on 49 active restrictions of its freedom of movement, all but one in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas. I would remind that access to Crimea, which is also a part of Ukraine temporarily occupied by Russia, has been completely denied by the Russian side since the very establishment of the SMM.

We thank the SMM for its findings presented to all participating States, which highlight the scale of Russia's illegal movements of military vehicles and trucks across the border, and we again urge the Russian side to stop restricting and intimidating the SMM activities in those areas.

Those facts underline Russia's persistent unwillingness to follow the track of peaceful resolution of the conflict it had initiated in 2014. The hybrid warfare in Donbas; illegal occupation of Crimea; forced imposition of the Russian citizenship in the occupied parts of Ukraine; propaganda, military and economic pressure; militarization of the Crimean peninsula, Black Sea and the Sea of Azov: all these flagrant violations of international law by the Russian Federation remain in place. Residents of the occupied territories voicing their concerns and objections continue to be persecuted, detained, sentenced under trumped-up charges and held behind bars in inhumane conditions. The most intensive pressure takes place for Crimean Tatars, an indigenous people of Ukraine, who used to live on the Crimean peninsula, against whom the Russian occupation authorities carry out a massive campaign of intimidation, keeping them in illegal detention and delivering long-term sentences for exercising the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression. We strongly condemn this policy, and we are grateful to all participating States keeping this topic high in their agendas.

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.