



**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 1245<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,

**Mr. Chairperson,**

On 29 October, Ukraine and Russia began the disengagement of forces and hardware at the Zolote disengagement area, monitored by the SMM. To make it happen, many efforts have been made by the Ukrainian side to ensure the safety of the local residents. We welcome the beginning of disengagement and hope it to be sustainable. Political will of the Russian side to stick to its commitments, including on the comprehensive ceasefire, remains critical in this regard.

Russia must also stop sending illegal supplies to its armed formations in the occupied parts of Donbas. In the last PC meeting, the Russian delegation announced several so-called "humanitarian convoys" to be sent to Donbas until the end of this year. Indeed, on 24 and 25 October, two of them arrived. Thanks to the SMM, we know exactly who was the recipient of this so-called "humanitarian aid": on 24 October, I quote, "the SMM also saw eight trucks marked "Humanitarian Aid from the Russian Federation" in a compound of the armed formations in Luhansk city".

The growing number of ceasefire violations along the contact line, which is apparently obvious in the recent SMM reports, is impossible without the regular supplies. Shellings with heavy weapons require missiles and ammunition. I would remind that in each and every weekly report since a recommitment to the ceasefire of 21 July, the SMM informed on the predominant number of weapons in violation of their respective withdrawal lines in the Russia-occupied parts of Donbas. These Minsk-proscribed weapons continue to be Russia's tool of controlled escalation, which it uses for political reasons to exert pressure on Ukraine.

The uncontrolled part of common border, which Ukraine and Russia share along the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, remains the root of the problem. Until the Ukrainian government reinstates its full control of the state border, it will be used by Russia to continue illegal supplies to its hybrid armed formations in Donbas. Military vehicles, trucks and buses continue to cross the border, near Manych and elsewhere. Cargo trains, loaded with coal, continue to move across the border and be observed by the SMM in Debaltseve, in Kuteinykove, in Ilovaisk, in Chervona Mohyla and elsewhere. In each report published by the SMM, the monitors provide a comprehensive picture of the ongoing systematic restrictions and denials of access by

the Russian armed formations in the border areas, which severely undermine the Mission's ability to monitor these areas.

In some meetings of the Permanent Council, we heard statements by the Russian delegation that it condemns any threats and attacks on the SMM and its assets. It is high time for the Russian side to transform these words into action and to stop violating the Mission's mandate, which provides safe and secure access throughout Ukraine. The Russian occupation authorities must, in particular, cease impediments in establishing and reporting facts, as well as in interacting with the local population in the occupied parts of Donbas, which the SMM continues to face, for instance, while highlighting the ongoing illegal so-called "population survey". The campaign of pressure on the SMM still takes place in the occupied areas. Two weeks ago, the SMM saw 19 people gathered in front of the SMM premises in the occupied Luhansk city, expressing messages critical of the visa policy of the Schengen Area. I would remind that Ukrainian citizens enjoy a visa-free entry into the Schengen Area, which calls into question either citizenship, or purposes of those people in front of the SMM premises.

The Ukrainian authorities remain committed to maintaining contacts with Ukrainian citizens living under the Russian occupation in parts of Donbas. On 23 October, the Government of Ukraine adopted the decision, which simplifies registration of births and deaths, which took place in those areas of Donbas. Ukraine does not recognize so-called "documents" issued by the illegal Russian armed formations. Certificates of births and deaths remain the only exception envisaged by the norms of international humanitarian law. Medical papers issued by the occupation authorities will be considered by the special commission, which will confirm the facts of birth and death and provide legal documents. This does in no way imply recognition of the illegal Russian occupation authorities.

On 29 October, an investment forum took place in Mariupol, one of the cities on the coast of the Sea of Azov, which suffered from Russia's illegal actions in the region, violating freedom of navigation and norms of international law. The day before, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine at its offsite meeting in Mariupol has, in particular, adopted the decision to strengthen the safety of navigation in the Sea of Azov, by including the territories adjacent to the Mariupol seaport into the water area subject to safety measures under the Merchant Shipping Code. In this context, we reiterate our call to the SMM to intensify monitoring of the situation in and around the Sea of Azov and to provide regular reports on this topic.

We continue to pay utmost attention to activities of the Russian side in the occupied parts of Donbas including its pressure, intimidation and political persecutions of Ukrainian citizens. On 22 October, journalist Stanislav Aseev was unlawfully sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment in the occupied city of Donetsk. As the MFA of Ukraine underlined in its statement, this fact confirmed once again that the occupation regime considers independent journalism as one of the main threats to its functioning. Those involved in Mr. Aseev's detention will be held accountable in accordance with the Criminal Code of Ukraine. We echo the words of RFOM Harlem Désir, who had strongly condemned imprisonment of Mr. Aseev and said that silencing of independent journalists is a crime against the freedom of expression. We urge the Russian side to immediate release Stanislav Aseev and all other unlawfully detained Ukrainian citizens. The pressure of the international

community on Russia is critical to secure the unconditional release of all Ukrainian citizens held hostages in the Russian Federation or in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

The same pressure, including through restrictive measures and economic sanctions, remains necessary to hold Russia accountable for its ongoing violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the temporarily occupied Crimea. Thanks to the work of independent NGOs, which continue gathering facts on these violations, we have at least a common understanding of the current developments. I invite delegations to take a close look at the monitoring review prepared by the Crimean Human Rights Group on the basis of information collected in September 2019. It provides a dire picture of blocking Ukrainian radio signal and Ukrainian websites by the Russian occupation authorities. In September, 5 new criminal cases against the Crimean residents were reported for evading conscription to the Russian Armed Forces military service. Forced conscription, which, I would remind, violates the norms of international humanitarian law.

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.**