



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

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**Statement
on Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine
and illegal occupation of Crimea**

As delivered by Mr. Ihor Lossovskyi,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1212th meeting of the Permanent Council,
17 January 2019

Mr. Chairperson,

Yet another recommitment to a permanent ceasefire in Donbas, agreed within the Trilateral Contact Group by Ukraine and Russia as parties to the conflict with mediation of the OSCE, has failed. The first violations of ceasefire by the Russian armed formations took place a few hours after its start on 29 December 2018. Two days later, the first cases of use of the Minsk-proscribed weapons by the Russian side were registered, and two Ukrainian servicemen were wounded. On 1 January, one Ukrainian military was killed and two were wounded. By 6 January, as reported by the SMM, the recorded ceasefire violations had reached about 80 per cent of levels recorded prior to the recommitment. The trend is clear. We share concerns of the SMM that the effects of all previous recommitments to ceasefire in Donbas have never been long-lasting. We witness the similar developments now. The Russian Federation is not willing to stop its ongoing armed aggression against Ukraine, which continues to undermine the European security and rules-based security order.

Despite its previously undertaken commitments, including according to the most recent TCG decision on ceasefire, the Russian side has not ensured safe and secure access of the SMM to the Russia-occupied territories of Ukraine. This violates the SMM mandate covering the whole territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Most notable and systematic restrictions of the SMM freedom of movement continue to take place in the occupied areas of Donbas adjacent to the border with Russia. Those areas are used by the Russian side to provide illegal supplies of weapons, manpower and ammunition to its armed formations waging a hybrid warfare in Donbas. Only last month, the Ukrainian authorities registered 6000 tons of lubricants delivered to the Russian proxies through the railway station of Rovenky and 60 trucks with ammunition, which arrived to Snizhne. On 13 January, at the border railway station in Voznesnivka, SMM spotted more than 60 cargo wagons, including 12 fuel tanks, as well as 60 train wagons loaded with coal,

travelling towards the border with the Russian Federation. The monitors were immediately urged by the Russian fighters to leave the area.

I would remind that an SMM long range UAV was shot down by the Russian armed formations on 27 October last year in one of such border areas after spotting another convoy of trucks illegally crossing the Russia-controlled segment of the state border. No clarifications or response actions by the Russian side followed till now: the Russian authorities maintain full silence on this issue. The same full silence we continue to witness on the ongoing campaign of intimidation and harassment, which the Russian armed formations in Donbas lead against the SMM monitors who are just trying to do their job we all asked them to do.

Mr. Chairperson,

On 26 December, the martial law expired in Ukraine. It was used by Ukrainian militaries to strengthen defensive capacities in the areas adjacent to the Russia-occupied parts of Donbas and the Ukrainian-Russian state border, where hundreds of additional pieces of heavy weapons were deployed by the Russian side in the recent months. As confirmed by the SMM in its discussions with civilians, representatives of media, business and local government, the martial law while being in effect has not brought any significant “changes or restrictions for civilians, including restrictions to freedom of assembly or to freedom of expression, in affected regions”.

While the martial law has not significantly affected local communities, what did affect was Russia’s ongoing reluctance to alleviate the humanitarian crisis caused by its aggression. In the current severe winter weather conditions in Ukraine, including sub-zero temperatures, thousands of civilians are forced to wait for hours to cross the contact line from the Russia-occupied areas to the government-controlled territories. Some of them die. While the government of Ukraine created all necessary conditions for ensuring humanitarian needs of people crossing entry-exit checkpoints during the winter, the Russian proxies pay no attention to hundreds and thousands of them registered by the SMM in queues at the entry-exit checkpoint near Stanytsia Luhanska. A very simple solution to this dire humanitarian crisis, that is opening the checkpoint at Zolote, which would be the second checkpoint in Luhansk region in addition to Stanytsia Luhanska, remains blocked by Russia for almost three years, since March 2016. We urge the Russian side to let this happen.

We also urge Kremlin’s regime to stop using people as hostages and to release, immediately and unconditionally, all illegally detained Ukrainian citizens in the Crimean peninsula and in Russia, as well as the crew of Ukrainian vessels captured by Russia in an unprovoked act of aggression near the Kerch Strait. We condemn illegitimate decision taken by the Lefortovo District Court of Moscow to prolong the pre-trial detention of Ukrainian servicemen and remind the Russian side on their legal status of Prisoners of War, which must be fully respected under international humanitarian law.

Proper medical treatment must be ensured for those Ukrainian citizens who are disabled and need daily medical assistance, including Pavlo Hryb and Edem Bekirov. We are grateful to SMM for the regular attention it pays to peaceful public gatherings in Kherson region of Ukraine in support of Crimean Tatar activists including Edem Bekirov illegally detained by the Russian occupation authorities. As Russia continues

to intimidate and persecute Crimean Tatars including by holding ungrounded searches in their houses, we reiterate the need of ensuring access of international humanitarian organizations, NGOs and OSCE executive structures and autonomous institutions to the occupied peninsula. Russia must also stop persecuting human rights defenders and lawyers providing legal support to the victims of Russian occupation. Emil Kurbedinov, a Crimean Tatar activist and lawyer, following his recent illegal arrest, now faces the threat of losing his lawyer's status, which would leave dozens of them of the necessary support.

In conclusion, we again urge the Russian Federation to reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea and to stop its aggression against Ukraine. Russia must fully implement its commitments under the Minsk agreements including withdrawal of its illegal armed formations from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.