



**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 Ihor Prokopchuk,  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1210<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
20 December 2018

### **Mr. Chairperson,**

14 December 2018 marked the 44<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN General Assembly Resolution 3314 (XXIX) which established the definition of aggression and called upon all States to refrain from all acts of aggression and other uses of force contrary to the UN Charter. This definition retains its full relevance, particularly in the case of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, which lasts for the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. Ukraine continues to confront Russia’s military invasion, occupation, attempted annexation, blockade of the ports, attacks on the Ukrainian Armed Forces by the regular Russian military and irregular Russia-led fighters and mercenaries. Russia’s claims of its non-involvement can deceive noone after years of occupation and hybrid warfare which left over 10 thousand people killed, 24 thousand wounded, nearly 1.5 million IDPs and 3.4 million of civilians in need of humanitarian assistance. As a matter of fact, Russia’s claims of non-involvement could not deceive even immediately after the military invasion started in February 2014.

The scope of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine continues to expand. The recent yet another unprovoked act of armed aggression, carried out by Russian regular forces against Ukrainian Naval Forces vessels near the Kerch Strait, highlighted the increasing threats from Russia to security and stability of the whole Black Sea and significantly wider region. I wish to draw attention of the Permanent Council to my letters circulated on Monday to the delegations of the participating States and Partners for Co-operation with the graphical and video presentations covering this topic. They provide facts, which also expose the fakes invented again by the Russian authorities to avoid responsibility for its aggressive actions and spread by the Russian delegation in the OSCE. We see it as a joint responsibility with other members of the OSCE community to make full use of all available tools to make Russia stop its aggression, which continues to gravely undermine the rules-based security order in Europe, the core OSCE principles and fundamental norms of international law. In this connection, we welcome this week’s adoption by the UN General Assembly of the Resolution “Problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov”, which was supported by the overwhelming majority of OSCE participating States (44 out of 56 represented in the UN).

Approaching the holiday season and the end of another year of ongoing Russia's aggression, we underscore the humanitarian implications of the plight of Ukrainian citizens held in Russia's captivity as prisoners of war, political prisoners and hostages. Yesterday in the TCG the Russian side again dismissed Ukraine's proposals. We reiterate our demand to the Russian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the Ukrainian servicemen, captured on 25 November, and the vessels. Before that happens, we demand that their rights as prisoners of war be fully respected by the Russian authorities. The Ukrainian sailors must return to their nearest ones, as well as dozens of Ukrainian political prisoners held in Russia's captivity on fabricated charges.

The security, humanitarian and socio-economic consequences of the aggression are increasing. In Donbas, the SMM recorded over 20,000 ceasefire violations in the past 2 weeks, almost two-fold increase as compared to the previous period, and a significant increase in the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons. On the coast of the Sea of Azov, the SMM registered further economic losses to the port of Mariupol caused by Russia's denial of passage to about 30 vessels sailing to and from Mariupol through the Kerch Strait in only one week from 25 November until 1 December. Overall, the port's cargo volume had decreased to, on average, 450,000 tons per month, compared with 700,000 before April 2018. We reiterate our demand to the Russian side to allow freedom of navigation, free and safe passage through the Kerch Strait. As the first step in monitoring the situation we consider important to have the SMM monitoring base opened in Kerch as soon as possible.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The Russian Federation continues to aim at concealing its full role in the armed conflict, it started and leads in Donbas, and the real extent of its negative consequences. As part of these efforts, Russia damages the effectiveness of the OSCE presence on the ground which remains an essential instrument of monitoring, verification and facilitation of conflict resolution. Since the beginning of this year, the SMM encountered over 900 non-mines related restrictions of access in the Russia-occupied parts of Donbas, especially near the state border and in southern parts of the Donetsk region adjacent to the Sea of Azov. Such restrictions and their scope impeded, in a targeted manner, the implementation of the Mission's mandate and severely undermined its ability to register the military movements of the Russian armed formations in Donbas and the channels of logistical support and procurement running through the state border. Whenever the SMM, either through a patrol on the ground or by the means of technical assets, attempts to establish facts on such activities, it risks being attacked, as was the case on 27 October, when a long-range UAV was downed by the Russian armed formations after spotting another convoy of trucks illegally crossing the Russia-controlled segment of the state border. The majority of the delegations in this hall, including Ukraine, still await Russia's clarifications regarding this attack, return of the UAV wreckage to the SMM and financial settlement for the lost UAV. We are concerned that for nearly eight weeks now the Russian authorities maintain full silence on this issue.

Unfortunately, the attacks continue. On 13 December, an SMM patrol was forced to immediately leave the area near Russia-occupied village of Lozivskyyi after the Mission's mini-UAV had been shot at by 4 Russian fighters when spotting "two military trucks with multiple masts, each with several antenna arrays, a generator unit and a trailer assessed as electronic warfare equipment". This makes us recall a variety of exclusive

Russian electronic warfare equipment that was already registered by the SMM in Donbas, including R-330 Zhitel, RB-341V Leer-3, 1L269 Krasukha-2, RB-109A Bylina, anti-UAV system Repellent-1. On 16 December, an SMM mini-UAV was fired at while conducting a flight west of Russia-occupied village of Khrustalnyi, a well-known area of concentration of Russian heavy weapons. According to available information, in the beginning of this month almost two thousand tons of fuel and lubricants were again delivered by Russia to the conflict area through the village of Rovenky, the railway station near the Russia-controlled state border. Illegal supplies of fuel and lubricants have regularly been registered there, including the most recent case on 16 December, when the SMM saw 24 gasoline tank railcars at this railway station.

We urge Russia to let the SMM monitors do their job and to lift all restrictions to their freedom of movement and access in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas, in particular at the state border and the areas adjacent to the Sea of Azov. The systematic restrictions imposed by Russia and its proxies are a breach of the SMM's mandate and the Minsk agreements.

### **Distinguished colleagues,**

In the illegally occupied Crimean peninsula Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars continue to be subjected to oppression and persecutions by the occupation administration. There are no independent Ukrainian mass media, be it newspapers, TV or radio, and there is no place for peaceful assembly or freedom of expression. Few remaining human rights defenders, lawyers and activists who continue their activities despite persecutions, are regularly targeted and placed under illegal detention, as was the recent case with Emil Kurbedinov. On 12 December, another Crimean Tatar activist Edem Bekirov was illegally detained under fabricated charges upon entry to the temporarily occupied Crimea, where he was heading to visit his mother and family. Although he is a person with disabilities, in the course of two days after his detention he received neither proper medical assistance, nor food or even water, which was not only a violation of his human rights, but a direct threat to his life. The dire human right situation in the peninsula underscores the urgent need of access and permanent monitoring there by respective international humanitarian organisations and the OSCE institutions.

We reiterate the imperative of stepping up the politico-diplomatic pressure on Russia, including by strengthening restrictive measures, to make it abide by its obligations under international 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.**