



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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**Statement on “Russia’s ongoing aggression against Ukraine
and violations of OSCE principles and commitments”**

As delivered by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1086th meeting of the Permanent Council,
21 January 2016

Mr. Chairman,

These days a year ago the Ukrainian soldiers displayed exemplary valour and heroism, defending the Donetsk airport from the daily attacks of Russian troops and pro-Russian militants. In violation of the Minsk agreements, Russian supervisors drove new and new waves of attackers without worrying about the number of losses on their side. Debaltseve, Maryinka and other offensive attempts by Russia and its proxies followed later despite additional agreements and commitments on de-escalation were undertaken by Russia.

The entire year of 2015 was marked by fragility of the security situation, when the periods of relative calm were alternated with new outbursts of violence, provoked by Russia and its militants to exert pressure on my country, in particular on the eve of political-level meetings. The Russia’s approach appears to remain unchanged as now we observe new attempts to escalate the situation on the ground. Despite recent agreement in the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group on establishing the comprehensive silence regime, the number of ceasefire violations continues to grow.

Only on 15-17 January the Ukrainian positions and the nearby residential areas were shelled for 124 times, including from 82 mm and 120 mm caliber mortars, grenade launchers, anti-aircraft weapons and IFV’s weaponry. 3 days ago the SMM registered the use by militants of MRLS “GRAD” in the location of Horlivka. On 18 January the village of Krasnohorivka sustained attack from 100 mm caliber cannon “Rapira”. These armed provocations by the militants led to new casualties among the Ukrainian servicemen and the peaceful civilians in Donbas.

We are outraged by the incident that happened to the SMM patrol in Maryinka on 16 January. Reported direction of the small-armed fire, which damaged the trunk window of the SMM vehicle, notably east-north-easterly, clearly pointed out to the militant-controlled area. We consider this incident to be one more attempt to intimidate the OSCE monitors and to impede effective performance of their functions. I recall that just one week earlier, on 7 January in Horlivka the militants forced the SMM monitors to leave their vehicles and to lay on the ground at gunpoint. We condemn these incidents.

We view as unacceptable serious restrictions by the illegal armed groups to the SMM's freedom of movement. Last Friday Deputy Chief Monitor Alexander Hug informed of 22 cases of denial of access with 20 of them in the militant-controlled area.

Full-fledged monitoring in the border area has not yet been the case. Even when allowed to approach some militant-controlled border sections, the monitors face restrictions and limitations. For instance, as it follows from the Mission's report of 18 January on the visits to closed BCPs, the SMM was able to monitor the situation in Uspenka for 20 minutes, in Dovzhanske - for 15 minutes, in Marynivka – for 10 minutes and in Ulyanisvke – for 5 minutes only.

We note with regret that the Russian Federation rejects the option to expand the mandate of the OSCE Observation Mission, operating now at the two Russian BCPs only. When discussing the previous agenda item, the Russian representative claimed joining consensus on extension of the mandate of this Mission, while in effect Russia obstructed the consensus being the only delegation opposing the needed expansion of the mandate. Despite the limited mandate of the OSCE Mission in “Gukovo” and “Donetks”, its observations contribute to the picture of the uncontrolled flows of fighters from Russia to reinforce illegal armed formations in Donbas. As the Mission reports, people wearing military-style clothes with military backpacks remain one of the main categories of individuals, crossing through both BCPs. It is clear that while these and other illegal channels of reinforcement remain open, it will not be possible to achieve sustainable de-escalation.

The recent developments prove that Russia and its proxies are still very far from fulfilling the three initial provisions of the Minsk agreements, which are crucial for progress on implementation of other aspects of the document. Until the comprehensive ceasefire is established, all heavy weapons are withdrawn and the OSCE SMM is granted free and unfettered access throughout the militant-controlled area, the prospects for implementing other steps, agreed in Minsk, will be elusive.

Establishing necessary conditions for holding local elections should remain our priority and we take note of intensive discussions on their modalities in the framework of the Trilateral Contact group and its political sub-group this week. As already agreed in Minsk, the local elections must be held in accordance with the Ukrainian legislation, OSCE standards and under the OSCE/ODIHR monitoring. This means, in particular, safe return and voting rights for IDPs, participation of the Ukrainian political parties, free functioning of the Ukrainian media. What is also required is safety and security through de-occupation of the affected areas of Donbas, disarmament of the illegal armed groups.

We regret that Russia and the illegal armed groups it backs continue to disengage from setting the ground for free and fair local elections in a safe environment, thus preventing progress on the essential political track of the Minsk agreements.

Distinguished colleagues,

Dire economic and humanitarian situation in the occupied areas of Donbas remains the matter of deep concern for the Ukrainian authorities and the OSCE community. The atmosphere of fear and defenselessness of the local civilians in the face of armed militants, attacks on local businesses and expropriation of property already led to the closure of many enterprises. Restrictions on Ukrainian and international humanitarian aid in the occupied areas continue to aggravate the life conditions of people in Donbas.

We already informed the Permanent Council about the criminal practice of dismantling and further transportation to Russia of equipment of main industrial facilities of Donbas. According to most recent reports, dismantling works were observed in Luhansk on “Parkhomenko Machine Building Plant”, “Machine Building Plant – 100”, Central Design Bureau of Machine Building “Donets”, Plant of Mine-Rescue Equipment “Horizon”, locomotive plant “Luhanskteplovoz” and Poly-Pack Company. These issues must receive appropriate response of the SMM.

These acts of robbery, which ruin the region, testify yet again that Russia’s hollow verbal sentiments about the “needs of Donbas people” are worlds apart from its real actions that bring misery and deprivation to these people.

Mr.Chairman,

We note with concern that the process of release of hostages and illegally detained persons continues to be impeded by Russia and its proxies, which impose conditionality contrary to the Minsk agreements. For now at least 130 Ukrainians remains in captivity of the militants in unacceptable conditions, many of them – for more than a year. At the last TCG meeting we again called on Russia to speed up their release on the basis of “all-for-all” principle, as it was agreed in Minsk. Reached arrangements on partial release were again disrupted by Moscow and militants.

This issue will remain of highest priority for my country until all our compatriots, including those illegally detained in Russia, are released.

Distinguished colleagues,

In the occupied Crimea and Sevastopol the occupying authorities continue repressions against all those, who oppose the illegal occupation and annexation of Ukraine’s territory by Russia.

Yesterday the so-called “prosecutor’s office” of occupying authorities announced readiness to act against Andriy Kolomiyets, who had been detained on allegations of attack on a Ukrainian police officer during the events in Kyiv in February 2014. We earlier informed the Permanent Council of the case of Crimean activist Oleksandr Kostenko, who was sentenced in May 2015 to 4 years in jail under the similar fabricated charges. Along with the charges of “organizing mass disorder” in Simferopol on 26

February 2014, these are the two main instruments that the Russian occupying authorities use to persecute Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars in the occupied Crimea.

This unacceptable situation prompts me to again urge the Russian Federation, as an occupying power, to take responsibility for stopping all human rights violations on the peninsula, to halt repressions against the representatives of the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar communities and to facilitate free and unconditional access of the international monitors to Crimea. I remind that under international law the occupying authorities bear responsibilities which so far the Russian Federation has entirely ignored.

Mr.Chairman,

I conclude by reiterating our persistent call on the Russian Federation to immediately take practical steps to implement its commitments on peaceful resolution in Donbas, undertaken in Minsk, and to exert its influence on the militants it supports to do likewise. Until now this has not happened.

We urge Russia to restore its respect for the norms of international law and the OSCE principles and commitments, to halt its aggression against Ukraine and reverse the illegal occupation and annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

Thank you, Mr.Chairman.