



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 1091th meeting of the Permanent Council,
3 March 2016

Mr. Chairman,

It is exactly two years ago that the OSCE Permanent Council convened for its special meeting on 3 March 2014 amidst the evidence of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The delegation of Ukraine emphasized then that the Russian military actions in Crimea pose “an imminent and serious threat to the regional security and to security of Europe that can have far-reaching repercussions”. Subsequent events in Ukraine’s Crimea and Donbas have proved that the worst-case scenarios materialized as Russia demonstrated contempt for the OSCE fundamental principles and international law.

Invasion of the Russian troops in Crimea has resulted in the illegal occupation of the peninsula and immediate restrictions and repressions. Most of the attacks targeted Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian communities, leaving some activists killed and disappeared. Nobody was punished for these crimes. Many others have faced intimidation, raids and searches, attacks on property and arrests under fabricated charges. Crimean Tatars leaders have been banned from entering their native soil.

Now the Russian occupation authorities take steps to ban the Mejlis – a representative body of the Crimean Tatar people. 70 years after deportation by the Stalin regime, this indigenous people again suffers from attacks on its national identity and attempts to silence its voice.

The record of the past two years shows that unless permanent monitoring of the OSCE and other international organizations is established in the peninsula the Russian occupation authorities will not stop human rights violations and the situation will further deteriorate.

Distinguished colleagues,

The conflict in Donbas as a second stage of the Russian aggression against Ukraine is still ongoing and already resulted in over 9000 killed, including 2600 Ukrainian soldiers, dozens of thousands wounded, over 1,5 million of IDPs.

Russia has built nearly 40 000-strong combined Russian-separatist force in Donbas, placing it under a single chain of command within its own Armed Forces. This illegal army has been supplied with sophisticated Russian weaponry, including a powerful TOS-1 Buratino registered by the SMM and others. Now it has in service about 470 tanks, 870 armored combat vehicles, 450 artillery systems, 190 MLRS, surveillance and secure communication devices, air defense systems.

Despite peaceful declarations by Russia, its weapons continue to arrive in Donbas through uncontrolled sections of the Ukrainian-Russian border. Over January-February Russia provided military supplies to its forces by sending 30 echelons and 28 vehicle columns with weaponry, ammunition and fuel. Two days ago, on 1 March, three wagons with ammunition and two wagons with tank engines and spare parts arrived to the train station of Illovaysk from Russia. Two tanks, four APCs, four trucks with personnel and two fuel trucks arrived to Novoazovsk. Six trucks with 120 mm mortars and four trucks with ammunition arrived to Sverdlovsk.

As part of rotation a unit from the 24th separate brigade of Special Forces, based in Novosibirsk, arrived to Donetsk.

Receiving constant resupplies, Russia and its proxies maintain intensive military provocations, including by using the heavy weapons. For instance, as reported by the SMM, the residential areas of Zaitseve were shelled by 152 mm artillery. The SMM registers tanks and howitzers in the very city of Donetsk. Early this morning, at 5.15, Ukrainian positions in Nevelske and Krasnohorivka were shelled by MRLS "Grad" from the Donetsk city and Staromykhailivka, at least 10 missiles in each case.

As a result, the toll of casualties continues to grow. Between 25 February and 1 March 5 Ukrainian soldiers lost their lives and 16 were wounded.

The serious degradation of security on the ground amplifies the urgency of implementation of the initial security provisions of the Minsk agreements, notably the comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire, verified withdrawal of heavy weapons, unfettered OSCE monitoring throughout the conflict area, including at the border with Russia.

We find unacceptable that Russia has not taken measures to remove serious restrictions to the OSCE SMM's access in the occupied territory of Donbas, including the border areas. The Mission's reports testify to the constantly high number of freedom-of-movement restrictions imposed by the militants. The SMM reported on 22 cases, which happened in the occupied territory of Donbas between 24 and 29 February and constitute 95% of all freedom-of-movement incidents in this period.

Mr.Chairman,

Decisive steps are needed to establish the necessary security conditions for peaceful resolution in Donbas. What is required is a real disengagement with the weapons securely withdrawn, militants' armed provocations made impossible and an enhanced

international presence, capable of effectively contributing to the security on the ground in addition to monitoring and verification functions that the OSCE SMM currently performs. This will be a major focus of today's Normandy Ministerial meeting. We welcome yesterday's agreement in the Trilateral Contact Group on demining and cessation of military exercises near the contact line which was promoted by Ukraine.

On the humanitarian track we consider it an encouraging sign that the process of release of hostages and illegally detained persons has been recently unblocked and 7 Ukrainian hostages, both servicemen and civilians, are back to their homes. However, about 130 people remain in militants' captivity in unacceptable conditions. The release of all hostages and illegally detained persons, including Ukrainians – political prisoners in Russia, remains of highest priority and a crucial benchmark for assessing Russia's readiness to embark the de-escalation path.

Security is a core requirement for implementation of the political provisions of the Minsk Agreements, including the local elections in the certain areas of Donbas. As envisaged by the Minsk Package of Measures they must be held in accordance with the Ukrainian legislation and the OSCE standards and under the OSCE/ODIHR monitoring. Ukraine is interested in holding them as a democratic procedure for producing legitimate representatives of the region, mandated to work together with central authorities on restoring safety and security, economic development and infrastructure of Donbas.

It is the way forward in peaceful political resolution of the conflict. However, this goal and agreed provision will not be achieved until the Russian troops and fighters withdraw from Donbas and the illegal armed formations are disarmed as envisaged by the Minsk agreements.

So far Russia has shown no signs of de-occupation of Donbas, moreover it strengthens its military grip on the occupied territories.

It is therefore of critical importance that the sanctions imposed on Russia for its military aggression against Ukraine, remain in place until Russia fully implements the undertaken Minsk commitments and Ukraine restores its control at the Ukrainian-Russian state border.

Distinguished colleagues,

For now two years we have persistently called on Russia as an OSCE participating State to live up to the OSCE principles, it has committed to respect and uphold.

Today we again urge Russia to return to the tenets of international law, to halt its aggression against Ukraine, to reverse the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and to take practical steps to implement its Minsk commitments on peaceful resolution in Donbas.

Thank you, Mr.Chairman.