



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

PC.DEL/390/18
12 April 2018

ENGLISH only

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 1181st meeting of the Permanent Council,
12 April 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

On 26 March 2018, the Trilateral Contact Group of Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE as a mediator reaffirmed full commitment to a comprehensive, sustainable and unlimited ceasefire, starting this time from 30 March, on the occasion of the upcoming Easter holidays. The TCG decision was followed by the Joint Statement of the leaders of the Normandy format countries of 29 March, in which they praised the agreement to renew the ceasefire regime and emphasized the importance of its strict observance and ensuring effective monitoring and verification by the SMM.

Unfortunately, the Russian side did not bother to even make an effort to sustain the ceasefire regime. It lasted for 10 minutes since the start on 30 March before Avdiivka, one of the well-known hotspots along the contact line, was shelled by the Russian armed formations from the Minsk-proscribed weapons. Since then, we witness regular and large-scale daily ceasefire violations, new casualties, Russian heavy weapons in residential areas and on-going restrictions and intimidation of the SMM monitors in the Russia-occupied areas of Donbas, which prevent the Mission from effective monitoring and verification it was requested to ensure. Even the day of Easter on 8 April, a prominent holiday for all Ukrainians, witnessed dozens of shellings, which left 5 Ukrainian servicemen wounded.

Distinguished colleagues,

The ongoing attacks by the Russian armed formations once again demonstrate the real value of pledges made by the Russian Federation and its total disregard for the undertaken commitments whether they are assumed within the TCG, N4 or other frameworks. The questions raised earlier at the meetings of the Permanent Council here, in the OSCE, were left unanswered by the Russian delegation.

We request the Russian delegation to explain why the Russian side maintains significant restrictions and impediments to the SMM’s freedom of movement in the Russia-occupied territories of Donbas? The SMM weekly reports of 27 March and

4 April registered 40 out of 43 non-mine related incidents to happen in Russia-occupied areas. Why instructions were issued to deny the SMM access to border crossing points and at a railway station close to the border with the Russian Federation in Luhansk region, in violation of the reached agreements?

As the Russian side failed to explain how the exclusive Russian weaponry, registered by the SMM, made its way to the Ukrainian territory, we would again ask about Russia's intentions of pulling out its armed formations and heavy weapons from the territory of Ukraine as prescribed by the Minsk agreements?

Mr. Chairperson,

The number of serious incidents when members of the Russian armed formations used firearms to threaten the OSCE civilian monitors, continues to grow. On 5 April, armed men near Kremynets charged weapon near the SMM patrol and threatened it. The next day, at the same checkpoint a Russian fighter demanded to check the SMM patrol's trailer, adding to two dozen cases of restrictions of freedom of movement of the SMM in the Kremynets area only in 2018.

The absence of due reactions of the Russian side consolidates a climate of impunity among the Russian armed formations and occupation administration in Donbas. They openly declare that the "SMM trailers would be subject to inspection as a rule irrespective of the SMM's mandated freedom of movement and the principle of inviolability of its property" near Kremynets, give orders "to prevent the SMM from passing the checkpoint" near Verkhnohyrokyvske, deny access of the SMM to heavy weapons holding areas in Donetsk region "without a written permission". In one single day of 30 March, three SMM UAVs were fired at in different locations of Russia-occupied parts of Donbas: near central railway station in Donetsk, close to a checkpoint near Olenivka, and over a training area near Miusynsk, where the SMM UAV crashed and the Russian fighters demanded that the SMM leave the area.

Distinguished colleagues,

Russia's strategy of "blinding" the SMM has not changed. As before, it aims at preventing the mission from presenting a full and unbiased picture of the developments on the ground.

The SMM's weekly report of 27 March emphasised that "effective comparison of numbers of weapons seen in violation of withdrawal lines in government-controlled and non-government-controlled areas remains difficult, largely due to greater restrictions of the SMM's freedom of movement in non-government-controlled areas", and added that "the SMM has been restricted from accessing locations where it previously saw weapons in violation. For example, on 21 March a member of an armed formation in western Donetsk city prevented the SMM from monitoring inside a warehouse where it previously saw weapons in violation of withdrawal lines."

Several recent daily reports informed that the SMM patrols were urged by the Russian fighters to leave the Chervona Mohyla railway station immediately after the monitors spotted dozens of cargo railway wagons, some of them cisterns, with the contents not visible. I would remind that Chervona Mohyla, alongside with Ilovaisk

and Rovenky, is one of the key routes of Russia's ongoing military designated supplies into the Ukrainian territory through the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. For instance, on 16 March, the Ukrainian authorities registered 14 cisterns of fuel and lubricants delivered to this railway station.

We once again emphasise that Russia must realize its responsibilities and undertake the necessary measures as the party to the conflict and to the Minsk agreements to ensure safety and security of the SMM monitors. Russia's departure from the JCCC in the end of 2017 was clearly a step in the opposite direction. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian part of the JCCC continues to function and to take efforts to ensure the security of the Mission's personnel, as it was the case on 28 March, when "the SMM informed Ukrainian officers of the JCCC about the presence" of anti-personnel mines near the Donetsk Filtration Station "and then observed as they were removed by Ukrainian State Emergency Service staff some hours later." We express strong condemnation of the use by the Russian Federation and its fighters of anti-personnel mines banned by the Ottawa Convention.

Mr. Chairperson,

Russia continues to undertake measures of masked integration of the temporarily occupied territories of Donbas into the Russian military, legal, economic and information space. Following last year's seizure of Ukrainian enterprises, recognition of the fake documents and introduction of Russian currency and tax system, now the Russian occupation administration cut the Ukrainian citizens, forced to live under Russia's occupation, from the mobile communication with government-controlled regions of Ukraine. As reported by the SMM, "Vodafone mobile communication services have remained mostly disrupted in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk region since 11 January", which prevented civilians from "staying in contact with relatives and, in many cases, complicated the collection of pensions in government-controlled areas" due to the absence of the relevant notifications from the bank. In contrast, as underlined by the SMM, "Phoenix, a mobile network provider in non-government-controlled Donetsk region, has continued to expand its services", which permit calling only to "other non-government controlled areas in Luhansk region and the Russian Federation". We strongly condemn the unabating purposeful actions of the Russian Federation which violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Distinguished colleagues,

In Russia-occupied Crimea all those who disagree with occupation, dissenting voices, civil activists, independent journalists and non-Russian ethnic communities keep being targeted by the Russian occupation administration. Systematic persecutions and pressure upon Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars has even strengthened after the illegal conduct of Russian presidential elections in the peninsula.

On 3 April, the Russian occupation court left in custody journalist Memedinov till at least 16 May. On 5 April, civil activists of NGO "Ukrainian Cultural Centre in Crimea" Olena Popova and Olha Pavlenko were summoned to the occupation prosecutor's office for questioning. On 6 April, Russia's Federal Security Service

officers armed with automatic rifles broke into a mosque in Pavlivka village and detained people by force till the end of interrogations. Ukrainian citizen Volodymyr Balukh who declared an open-ended hunger strike a month ago in protest against his unjust imprisonment, has been continuously denied medical assistance of Ukrainian medics.

We urge Russia to immediately release all political prisoners convicted by the Russian occupation administration on fabricated charges, including those detained in the territory of the Russian Federation, in particular Roman Sushchenko, whose detention has again been extended by the Moscow court, this time till 30 September 2018.

We note that consistent appeals of the international community to Russia, in particular on putting an end to grave human rights violations, remain ignored by the Russian authorities. Such situation requires that appeals are backed up by increased international pressure on the aggressor state.

We again urge the Russian Federation to reverse the illegal occupation of Crimea and Sevastopol, and to stop its aggression, including by withdrawing its armed formations from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and fully implementing its commitments under the Minsk agreements. We urge the Russian Federation to restore respect for its obligations under international law, for the OSCE principles and commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.