



**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 Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1191<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
5 July 2018

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The security developments over the last few days in Donbas compel me to state that another recommitment to a comprehensive, sustainable and unlimited ceasefire in Donbas started to fail immediately after entering into effect. On 1 July, the Russian armed formations carried out 25 shellings targeting the Ukrainian military positions and residential areas, including the locality of Zaitseve bombarded by 120mm mortar rounds. In the second day of the announced ceasefire we registered 21 shellings, 1 Ukrainian serviceman was wounded. Some of these shellings were reported by the SMM, including “about 50 undetermined explosions” recorded after the start of the ceasefire in Luhansk region. For comparison, the last day before the recommitment to ceasefire entered into force recorded 26 shellings by the Russian armed formations, which was only a fraction more than after its beginning. Yesterday four Ukrainian servicemen got wounded during the Russian attacks. This is the reality of the ongoing Russian aggression: during four years after the Minsk agreements were signed, Russia’s unwillingness to act in good faith and fulfill its own commitments remains the main obstacle for any progress in the process of peaceful politico-diplomatic resolution of the conflict started by Russia.

It continues to be impossible to move forward in implementing the security provisions of the Minsk agreements, let alone the political ones, as long as Russia lacks the necessary will to deliver on its part of the undertaken commitments. As a result, there is no withdrawal of Russian armed formations and military equipment from the territory of Ukraine and disarmament of all illegal groups, but instead a large-scale Russian military presence continues to be registered in the occupied areas. For instance, the SMM weekly report of 28 June indicates the presence in the residential areas of the Donetsk city of “two self-propelled howitzers, 31 tanks and about 25 armoured combat vehicles”. Instead of disengagement, we keep receiving the reports of the SMM on IFVs and anti-tank mines in the Russia-controlled eastern edge of the Petrivske disengagement area, reinforced trenches inside the Russia-controlled south-eastern edge of the Zolote disengagement area, and an anti-aircraft gun in the garden of a house in the Russia-controlled south-western edge of the Stanytsia Luhanska disengagement area. Instead of respecting the contact line defined by the Minsk agreements, the Russian armed formations near the Donetsk Filtration Station, a critical civilian infrastructure often in

the focus of attention of the Permanent Council, increase their military presence: the SMM “saw a new 250-300m stretch of trenches north-west of Yasynuvata”. There is no permanent monitoring and verification by the OSCE at the Ukrainian-Russian state border, as prescribed by the Minsk agreements, but instead we witness uninterrupted flows of Russian fighters, weapon and ammunition and the so-called “humanitarian convoys” illegally crossing into Ukraine from the Russian Federation with their contents concealed by the Russian fighters from the SMM.

**Distinguished colleagues,**

The Russian armed formations commanded by Russian servicemen, equipped with Russian weapons and paid by Russian rubles continue their attacks on Ukraine and its people on the sovereign territory of Ukraine. The established facts are irrefutable, they are documented and their number is growing. In the last weeks the Russian delegation persistently ignored our questions about modern Russian weapons and military equipment registered by the SMM in Donbas, like TORN radio intelligence system or Kornet anti-tank guided missile. Last Wednesday, the SMM spotted again a TORN system at the same location where it had previously been reported near Debaltseve. We again ask the Russian Ambassador to provide explanation on how this sophisticated Russian military equipment was delivered to a location in the Donbas region of Ukraine and who operates this complex Russian system.

As facts matter, we continue to witness the Russian armed formations in Donbas doing everything possible to restrict the SMM’s ability to establish and report facts through gathering information in accordance with its mandate. In the Russia-occupied parts of Donbas, the SMM patrols regularly face denials of access “due to “specific orders” prohibiting the SMM from visiting even those locations where the Mission was allowed to enter earlier, they cannot enter heavy weapons holding areas and military compounds, and they are forced to leave the checkpoints and areas near the border with the Russian Federation. In the first six months of 2018, the SMM encountered 385 non-mine related restrictions of its freedom of movement in the Russia-occupied territories of Donbas, which was 8 times more than in the government-controlled areas (45) or 90% of all such restrictions.

The Russian strategy of “blinding” the SMM allows patrols’ access only to those locations where they cannot register the Russian military presence. For instance, all but one (12 out of 13) observations of the Minsk-proscribed heavy weapons in violation of respective withdrawal lines in the Russia-occupied territories of Donbas and included in the SMM weekly report of 26 June were made with the use of technical means of LR UAVs. The civilian unarmed monitors continue to come under threat, their lives are put at a direct risk in the areas, where the Russian side is particularly eager to conceal its activities. An outrageous incident happened on 22 June near Petrivske, when “a member of the armed formations carrying an assault rifle (AK-47) and displaying signs of intoxication” forced an SMM patrol vehicle to turn and drive back on a mine-contaminated road. We strongly condemn such behavior of Russian fighters and call upon the Russian Federation to take responsibility for putting an immediate end to it.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Together with deep concern over unwillingness of the Russian side to abide by the security provisions of the Minsk agreements, we are equally concerned over the lack of

progress in the humanitarian field. On 25 June the MFA of Ukraine held together with the Security Service of Ukraine a joint open briefing for representatives of the diplomatic corps in Kyiv in connection with crimes committed by the Russian Federation, as well as by its occupation administrations in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. It was underscored that over one hundred hostages continue to be illegally detained by the Russian occupation administration in Donbas. While the Russian side keeps denying any access of the international humanitarian organizations, including ICRC, to the hostages, we have no verified information on their condition and health. On the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture the MFA of Ukraine pointed out, in particular, that regular due monitoring by specialized international mechanisms had been continuously rejected by Russia and its occupation administrations.

For now there is no objective information on the conditions and health of Ukrainian political prisoners illegally held on the territory of the Russian Federation. After the respective arrangement was reached in the phone call between the presidents of Ukraine and the Russian Federation as well as after the respective discussion in the Normandy Four ministerial meeting, the Ukrainian Ombudsperson L. Denisova arrived to Russia and was not allowed to visit a single Ukrainian citizen on her list during her two weeks stay there. Attempts were made to see Oleg Sentsov in Labytnangi (Siberia) twice, Mykola Karpiuk in Vladimir, Roman Sushchenko in Moscow and all to no avail. In the last TCG meeting on 27 June, the Russian delegation has again made no reaction to the proposal of the Ukrainian side to exchange Russian citizens sentenced for violating Ukraine's sovereignty for Ukrainian political prisoners held on the territory of the Russian Federation and in the Russia-occupied Crimea. The current situation makes it clear that increased international pressure on Russia is urgently needed to achieve progress on the issue of release of Ukrainian citizens illegally detained or imprisoned by the Russian authorities on fabricated and politically motivated charges. I remind that Oleg Sentsov and Volodymyr Balukh continue their indefinite hunger strikes. In a display of boundless cynicism today the occupation "court" convicted Volodymyr Balukh to additional five years in prison on trumped-up charges of assault on an officer of the penitentiary institution. The only "guilt" of Volodymyr Balukh which entailed cruel reprisals of the occupation regime is that he loves and is loyal to his country and at one point decided to hoist the Ukrainian national flag at his private house.

Blogger and civil activist Nariman Memedinov, who was arrested in Crimea earlier on trumped-up charges of terrorism propaganda, was placed into a psychiatric hospital for a 20-day so called "examination", reminding of the Soviet practices of "punitive psychiatry". Another Crimean Tatar, Renat Paralamov, who was abducted, tortured and released last year, now faces accusations of trafficking in explosives and ammunition whereas the FSB officers responsible for the abduction and torture remain unpunished.

The repressions and blatant violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Crimea and Sevastopol will continue until Russia reverses its illegal occupation. We again urge the Russian Federation to make this step 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.**