



**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 Yevheniia Filipenko,  
Deputy Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1192<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
12 July 2018

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Russia’s ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea continue to be in the spotlight of international community. This Monday, 28 EU Member States have reiterated “strong condemnation of the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces since February 2014” in the Joint statement following the 20<sup>th</sup> EU-Ukraine Summit held in Brussels. Four and a half years since the Russian Federation invaded and occupied Crimea in February 2014, we continue to witness Kremlin’s unwillingness to stop the act of aggression against Ukraine and to return to the tenets of international law.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The security situation in Donbas remains tense and unpredictable. In its weekly report of 3 July, the SMM confirmed that the Ukrainian Armed Forces issued orders prohibiting the use of all weapons and ensuring the “silence” regime along the entire contact line in Donbas, except in case of threat to the lives of its service members and civilian population and in case of attempts to move the contact line. When the SMM put the same question to a member of the Russian armed formations in a district of Donetsk city, the mission received an answer that “he was not aware of such a recommitment to the ceasefire.”

Under these circumstances, when one party to the conflict is not aware of its commitments, it should come as no surprise that the “harvest ceasefire” continues to be violated on the daily basis: the Russian fighters continue shellings causing further casualties among Ukrainian servicemen and civilians. As properly emphasized by the SMM, it has “previously observed short-lived reductions in armed violence following each renewed commitment to cease fire, none of which have become a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire.” Over and over again, we face a situation when any progress in implementing the Minsk agreements is hampered by Russia’s unwillingness to honour its commitments.

The relative reduction in the number of ceasefire violations is actively used by the Russian armed formations to strengthen their military presence along the contact line:

the SMM has in particular registered new trenches and positions in Russia-occupied part of Zaitseve and near Bezimenne. It is notable that those observations were made with the use of aerial imagery, which along with the long-range UAVs remains the only reliable source of information under the conditions when the SMM patrols are denied access to the “non-government-controlled areas” of Donbas. The same day when the aerial imagery revealed the presence of new defensive positions near Bezimenne, members of the Russian armed formations at a checkpoint near the same locality “denied the SMM passage, citing orders from superiors.” They did the same next day in the same place by preventing an SMM patrol from continuing west of Bezimenne towards Sakhanka and Pikuzy and jammed an SMM mid-range UAV, with which the Mission lost communication over areas near Sakhanka. New trenches of the Russian armed formations were reason enough for denying access and jamming an UAV. We have previously observed this direct correlation between Russia’s unwillingness to disclose its military activities in the occupied territories of Donbas and its eagerness to “blind” the SMM. The whole area between Mariupol and the state border with the Russian Federation, a zone within which deployment of heavy armaments and military equipment is proscribed according to the Minsk Memorandum, seems to be closed for the SMM by the Russian side: an SMM UAV was shot near Russia-occupied Vesele; armed formations denied the SMM access to Russia-occupied Siedove insisting that “prior permission was needed from senior members of the armed formations”; SMM patrols were again prevented from accessing Pikuzy and Sakhanka.

**Distinguished colleagues,**

The SMM is our common asset. Its mandate and budget were adopted by a joint decision of all 57 participating States. The SMM personnel comprises unarmed civilian monitors from 44 of them. It is totally unacceptable that one participating State continues to threaten, intimidate and attack those brave women and men in its own interest. The SMM weekly report of 10 July informs about 32 non-mine related incidents when the Mission’s freedom was limited by members of the Russian armed formations. It is Russia’s deliberate policy directed against the SMM in order to undermine its effectiveness and to impede fulfillment of its mandate. A case in point was on 6 July, when “the SMM saw a minivan with the logo of an international organization passing without undergoing any inspection” through the same checkpoint near Russia-occupied Horlivka where the Russian armed formations requested to inspect the trunks of the SMM’s vehicles and did not allow the SMM to proceed through it. On 10 July, “two armed members of the armed formations again stopped the SMM at a checkpoint east of Oleksandrivske and said that they had orders not to allow the SMM to pass through the checkpoint.” We are also seriously concerned in connection with a misinformation campaign against the SMM led in Russia-occupied territories of Donbas reported by the SMM. We share the Mission’s assessment that “such information, in addition to being false, may contribute to an adverse environment among the local population for the SMM.” We ask the Russian delegation to provide explanation on this selective and discriminative treatment to the SMM and its activities.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

We add our voice to Ambassador Apakan who said that “it is high time for the civilian population to be able to go about their everyday lives” in his joint statement with

Ambassador Sajdik of 6 July. Civilians will be able to fully enjoy their human rights, fundamental freedoms and everyday lives without fear and persecutions only when the Russian armed formations and Russian occupation administration leave the sovereign territory of Ukraine. Until then, they continue to face long waiting hours during the inspection of documents by the Russian armed formations, who are “checking documents to see if people had unpaid debts in non-government-controlled areas” and are forced to attend “a compulsory military-type training” in the Russia-occupied territories of Donbas, as reported by the SMM. We look forward to receiving more information on the deteriorating situation in those territories at the informal briefing by the SMM Deputy Chief Monitor on human dimension issues to be held next Wednesday.

**Distinguished colleagues,**

The humanitarian situation in other Russia-occupied territories of Ukraine – the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol – also continues to deteriorate. This week, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly recognized this fact by adopting the relevant Resolution, in which the participating States condemned violations, abuses, measures and practices of discrimination against the residents of the temporarily occupied Crimea, as well as unlawful imposition of laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Crimea by the Russian Federation.

The intensity of political persecutions by the Russian occupation regime directed at silencing the dissenting voices of Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars in the occupied Crimea is only growing. On 5 July, Ukrainian political prisoner Volodymyr Balukh who received a prison term for hoisting Ukrainian national flag in his private house was again sentenced by the illegal occupation court under trumped-up absurd allegations of assaulting the head of a detention center, increasing his prison term to 5 years. It was a deliberate act of revenge for indefinite hunger strike started by Volodymyr Balukh almost four months ago in protest against his illegal detention. As emphasized in the comment by the MFA of Ukraine of 5 July, strengthening political repressions in the occupied Crimean peninsula requires further intensification of international politico-diplomatic and economic pressure on Moscow. In this context, we once again note the Joint statement of the 20th EU-Ukraine Summit, in which Ukraine and the EU leaders called for the immediate release of all illegally detained and imprisoned Ukrainian citizens in the Crimean peninsula and in Russia. Today Russia continues to hold behind bars under politically motivated charges over 60 Ukrainian citizens, including Oleg Sentsov, Volodymyr Balukh, Oleksandr Kolchenko, Stanislav Klykh, Roman Sushchenko, Server Mustafaiev and Uzer Abdullaiev. Until now, numerous international appeals, including from the OSCE quarters, remained unanswered by the Russian Federation.

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.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**