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Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Statement on Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea

As delivered by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1232nd meeting of the Permanent Council,
13 June 2019

Mr. Chairperson,

At the PC meeting last Thursday on 6 June, we and other delegations strongly urged the Russian Federation to abide by its commitments including on establishment of sustainable ceasefire in Donbas. During the night of the same day, the Russian armed formations used heavy artillery to shell Ukraine's military positions near Novoluhanske. Two Ukrainian soldiers were killed and eight wounded in this one nightly attack. We face these blatant violations of the Minsk agreements every single day, as Russia continues to pursue its aims of destabilizing Ukraine and making it surrender on Kremlin's terms. Overall in the last three months since the most recent ceasefire agreement came into effect on 8 March, 33 Ukrainian servicemen were killed and 165 wounded. This is the dearest price paid for defending the country from Russian aggression.

Attempting to justify severe violations of ceasefire regime, the Russian proxies continue military provocations, not sparing civilian objects and residential areas. The shelling of mosque in Donetsk city, which was mentioned in the last PC meeting, was one of those cases. The distance to the nearest Ukrainian military forward position in that area is 5.5 km, while the maximum 82mm mortar range is 4km. At the same time, the nearest forward position of the Russian armed formations is only 1km, which was emphasised by the SMM in its daily report of 5 June. We have already witnessed it in the past when the Russian side would shell the areas it occupies and later put the blame on the Ukrainian authorities including as a scene for Russia's propaganda media. We strongly condemn this practice and urge the Russian side to stop provocations

and to start implementing the Minsk agreements, starting with a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire. The following security steps are clear and must be fulfilled by Russia as a party to the conflict. They include:

First, withdrawal of the Russian heavy weapons from the line of contact and allowing the SMM to ensure effective monitoring and verification of this withdrawal. Instead, the SMM continues to register in its weekly reports dozens of weapons in violation of their respective withdrawal lines in Donbas, only a handful of which – in the government-controlled areas.

Second, Russia must allow the permanent monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian state border and verification by the SMM. It must lift all restrictions and impediments it had imposed on civilian unarmed monitors. Only in 2 days of 8 and 9 June, the SMM patrols were denied access to border crossing points at Sievernyi and Izvaryne, as well as checkpoints at Zaichenko, Pikuzy and Novoazovsk in the border areas. We are grateful to the SMM that even in these current conditions, it continues establishing facts on supplies sent by Russia through the segment of the state border it controls. Last week, it registered a new transborder route of military-type trucks through Cheremshyne, where there are no border crossing facilities, used by Russia to send resupplies to a compound of the Russian armed formations on the south-eastern outskirts of Luhansk city. It has also confirmed that the transborder route through Manych, where an SMM long-range UAV was shot down in October last year after observing convoys on seven occasions, remains active: the patrol “saw fresh tire tracks, assessed as being caused by heavy trucks”.

Third, the Russian Federation must withdraw its armed formations, military equipment, as well as mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine under monitoring of the SMM. Until now Russia defies its commitments and continues to supply manpower and weapons to the occupied parts of Donbas. On 6 June, on the western edge of Pervomaisk the SMM saw a surveillance radar system “Kredo-M1”, which was taken into service of the Russian Armed Forces in 2002. This weapon adds to a long list of Russian modern sophisticated weapons registered earlier by the SMM in Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine. They highlight the undeniable fact of Russia’s military aggression against my country and continuing gross violation of OSCE principles and commitments. Three days later, on 9 June, an SMM patrol was fired at by the Russian fighters near Molodizhne, a couple of kilometres from the western edge of Pervomaisk. It was yet another case of direct intimidation of civilian monitors by the Russian armed formations, which do not want the SMM to register Russian weapons in the occupied territories of Donbas and be able to present the full picture to the international community.

Fourth, the Russian side must implement its commitments on disengagement within the specified areas. Instead of groundlessly putting blame on Ukraine regarding disengagement in Stanytsia Luhanska, Russia should stop violating ceasefire in this area, providing the necessary security environment for

disengagement. On 9 June, the SMM confirmed that the Ukrainian Armed Forces forward position in that area was damaged by “small-arms fire from a southerly direction”, where the Russian militants were located.

Fifth, the Russian armed formations must stop jeopardizing the lives of Ukrainian citizens and to start fulfilling obligations on demining and fencing. On 23 February this year, two civilians were killed in a mine explosion near Olenivka, 200m south of the forward position of the Russian armed formations on the road, regularly used by civilians. Last week, the SMM spotted two anti-tank mines planted near Olenivka, in the same area between road lanes, where two civilians lost their lives. This practice is unacceptable and must be stopped.

Without Russia’s implementation of its commitments under the security provisions of the Minsk agreements, any further progress on the political track is out of the question. The same is true for Russia’s steps violating Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity: Kremlin must dismantle its occupation authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk, return all seized Ukrainian enterprises to their legal owners, stop recognizing fake so called “documents” issued by the Russian proxies and revoke its decision on the expedited issuance of the Russian passports. These measures are necessary, and they are entirely possible if Russia takes the decision to proceed with peaceful politico-diplomatic resolution of the conflict. We again remind the Russian side of its obligations to fulfil the orders issued by the international courts, in particular on the release of Ukrainian servicemen and naval vessels according to the provisional measures ordered by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the occupied Crimean peninsula, political persecutions of Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars perpetrated by the Russian occupation authorities, grow ever stronger. During the night from 4 to 5 June, the Russian special forces carried out armed searches in at least 9 houses of Jehovah’s Witnesses in occupied Sevastopol, arrested one man, called him “a leader of a local cell of the religious sect” and filed criminal charges, whereby he faces a prison sentence of up to 10 years. The unacceptable situation with Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Russian Federation has been repeatedly on the agenda of the Permanent Council. We strongly condemn Russia’s policy of the unlawful imposition of its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Crimea, and demand that the Russian Federation respects obligations under international law with regard to respecting the laws in force in Crimea prior to occupation, in full accordance with UN GA Resolution 73/263 of 22 December 2018 “Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine”.

On 6 June, the Russian occupation court in Simferopol extended arrest of Crimean Tatar Edem Bekirov until 12 August. Before that, a disabled older

person with diabetes was kept for 12 hours while awaiting his hearing without any food or medical care. We insist that this inhumane treatment must stop, absurd charges be lifted, and Edem Bekirov be immediately released.

The same day, another occupation court has illegally sentenced Ukrainian citizen Kostiantyn Davydenko under fabricated accusations of espionage to 10.5 years behind bars in a strict regime colony. He was detained on 11 February last year in the city of Simferopol and kept in custody since that time.

On 10 June, the Russian security forces conducted another wave of illegal searches in the houses of Crimean Tatars in different districts of the occupied Crimea. 8 persons were detained, again under the trumped-up charges of alleged belonging to Hizb ut-Tahrir, an organisation that is legal in Ukraine, but banned by the Russian occupation authorities. This persistent practice of intimidating Crimean Tatars requires close attention of the OSCE Chairmanship and the Institutions – the HCNM and ODIHR, which should duly and promptly react to this another act of large-scale repression of civilians by the Russian occupation authorities.

We again urge the Russian Federation to reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea 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.