



**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 Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1249<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
28 November 2019

**Mr. Chairperson,**

We again witness continued attempts by the Russian side to undermine the recent positive developments in Donbas. On 26 November, the Russian armed formations delivered fire at the Ukrainian military positions from Petrivske, a village located in the immediate vicinity of Petrivske disengagement area. Their clear intention was to provoke a response fire and to blame Ukraine for violating the Minsk agreements on the disengagement of forces and hardware. The Ukrainian servicemen did not fire in response. We stay committed to meeting our obligations and urge the Russian side to act likewise.

The SMM reports confirm the ongoing dismantling of military positions of the Ukrainian and Russian sides in Petrivske disengagement area and completion of this work in Zolote disengagement area. This process must not be used by Russia for its military and propaganda purposes. It should rather focus its efforts on implementing its part of obligations, including ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons.

Last week, the SMM weekly report informed on 18 weapons in violation of their respective withdrawal lines, all of them in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas. This week, this number was 17, out of which only 2 were registered in government-controlled parts of Donbas. The presence of the Russian Minsk-proscribed weapons along the contact line constitutes a direct threat to the ceasefire and puts the lives of civilians under risk. The SMM has spotted, for instance, I quote, "ten weapons (various types) in violation of withdrawal lines in non-government-controlled Donetsk city", end of quote.

On 21 November, the Russian armed formations targeted with an anti-tank guided missile a support military vehicle delivering food and water in the village of Shumy, in which there are no military positions. Three persons were wounded. On 25 November, a woman walking with a three-year-old child in the town of Mar'inika was wounded by small-arms fire of the Russian proxies. We strongly condemn Russia's military attacks increasing the toll of civilian casualties in Donbas.

The civilians continue to bear the brunt of the ongoing Russia's aggression. Daily, thousands of them spend hours while waiting in queues to cross the contact line, which, I remind, emerged on the map of Ukraine as a result of Russia's armed

intervention and occupation of the parts of Ukraine's territory. The bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska, which was repaired by the Ukrainian government, has alleviated sufferings of civilians crossing the respective checkpoint. Still, the situation at the other segments of the contact line remains challenging. The SMM informed on civilians complaining about the functioning of the Kreminets checkpoint located in Russia-occupied part of Donetsk region of Ukraine. In Luhansk region, Stanytsia Luhanska remains the only checkpoint available for civilians. We remind the Russian side that Zolote entry-exit checkpoint, also in Luhansk region, stands ready to be opened since March 2016, and the only reason why it is yet not operational, is the lack of political will of the Russian side. We thank the Slovak Chairmanship for its clear message in the last meeting of the Permanent Council on the necessity to open additional EECs in Luhansk region.

We expect the dire humanitarian situation in Donbas caused by the ongoing Russia's aggression to be extensively presented at the side-event titled "Humanitarian aspects of the crisis in and around Ukraine" organized by the Slovak Chairmanship on the margins of the Ministerial Council in Bratislava.

We would also draw attention of the participating States to the fact that the scale of humanitarian crisis brought by Russia's occupation of Ukraine's parts of the territory remains widely underestimated, as the Russian armed formations continue their campaign of restricting and impeding activities of the SMM. The Mission's weekly reports of 19 and 26 November informed on overall 51 non-mine-related cases of restrictions – all of them, but two, in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas. In some cases, the monitors explicitly cited so-called "orders from those in control" not to let the monitors in. We remain seriously concerned on the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Russia-occupied parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. We know too little what happens there and in which conditions local residents are forced to live. We reiterate our call to the SMM to continue shedding light on the activities of the Russian occupation administration.

In the previous meetings of the Permanent Council, we paid a lot of attention to the unlawful seizure and detention of the three Ukrainian warships and twenty-four crewmembers on board those vessels by Russia in the Black Sea going peacefully to the Ukrainian port of Odesa on 25 November 2018. As you know, Russia released them but still has not complied with the Order of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Before releasing the vessels, in violation of the ITLOS Order, Russia seized weapons, communications equipment, documents etc. from the vessels, all of which remain in Russia. Moreover, Russia imposed conditions on the release of the crew members and continues to deny their immunity. In a recent phone conversation on 25 November, President Zelenskyy raised this issue with President Putin and stressed the need to return all weapons, equipment and documentation that had been aboard.

We urge the Russian Federation to reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea, militarization of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, 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.**