



**Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine
at the 785th FSC Plenary Meeting**

(22 April 2015 at 11.00, Hofburg)

Agenda item 2

Madam Chair,

In the course of four weeks since the last meeting of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation the situation in certain areas of Donbas and on the occupied territories of Ukraine in Crimea has remained volatile and tense as the Russian aggression against Ukraine and its support to the illegal armed groups in the east of Ukraine have continued. Ukraine is deeply concerned over the massive surge in ceasefire violations by pro-Russian militants in some areas of Donbas. They again resort to use of heavy artillery that must have been withdrawn under the Minsk agreements.

The militants continued shelling positions of the Ukrainian forces as well as civilian locations and undertaking infantry and tank attacks in the attempts to push them out of some locations. According to the ATO Headquarters, recently the militants began to use a new tactic - they start firing at the Ukrainian positions with 82mm mortars which do not fall under the Minsk package and then continue with 120mm battalion level mortars which must have been withdrawn under the Minsk agreements. This tactic is aimed at complicating the identification by the OSCE SMM observers of heavy weaponry used by pro-Russian militants. It is especially alarming that the instances of shelling with MLRS Grad not only resumed, but have increased recently. Since February 15, when the immediate and comprehensive ceasefire was established by the relevant provision of the Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, the Russia-backed militants have shelled Ukrainian positions **over 2500 times**.

Intense fighting continues to take place in Shyrokyne near Mariupol. In Donetsk region, militants continuously attacked the Donetsk airport, Avdiyivka, Svitlodarsk, Pisky, Opytne, Vodyane, Tonenke, Popasna, Krasnohorivka etc. In Luhansk region, they targeted Stanytsya Luhanska, Zolote, Schastya etc. Since 15

February **65** Ukrainian military have been killed and **243** were wounded as a result of shelling and attacks.

The present situation shows that it remains imperative for the Russian Federation and the militants it backs to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honor their commitments, in particular on ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons. Every effort must be made to secure a comprehensive and unconditional ceasefire, which has not yet happened. We reiterate that any attempts by the Russia-backed separatists to gain control of additional territory will seriously undermine all efforts in promoting a sustainable political resolution of the conflict.

As a practical step towards de-escalation Ukraine has strongly encouraged to demilitarize the area of Shyrokyne by withdrawing all forces from the village and surroundings. We commend the prompt engagement of the SMM in elaborating practical modalities of implementation of this initiative. We also emphasize the need for deployment of the OSCE observers in 10 areas of concern across Donbas, where the regular ceasefire violations are registered, to provide 24/7 monitoring. Experience shows that the OSCE presence leads to militants' restraint in committing violations.

Distinguished colleagues,

The on-going militants' military activities are directly linked to continuing reinforcements they receive from the Russian Federation. Russia has not pulled back its regular troops and mercenaries as well as military equipment from Ukraine. According to the statement made on 18 April 2015 by General Viktor Muzhenko, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, there are Russian military units in the east of Ukraine, such as: 15th Separate Mechanized Infantry Brigade of the 2nd Army of the Central Military District; 8th Separate Mechanized Infantry Brigade; 331st Airborne Regiment of the 98th Airborne Division and others. Russia also concentrates a large amount of military personnel and equipment in regions of Russia close to Ukraine's eastern border and in the occupied Crimea. Recently, it has started concentrating landing ship forces in the Sea of Azov.

Russia has set up its command and control centers to coordinate military operations in the east of Ukraine and established bases in the region for training militants. Russian subversion and reconnaissance groups still regularly arrive in Ukraine and run their illegal activities, in particular with UAVs. At the same time there is growing evidence that Russia continues flowing heavy weapons and manpower to the east of Ukraine. In particular, a few days ago a train of military cargo from Russia was unloaded in the train station of the city of Sverdlovsk.

While the Russian Federation continues to deny its direct military involvement in the conflict in the east of Ukraine, the available evidence proves the opposite.

Distinguished colleagues,

We would like to take this opportunity to bring to the attention of the participants of this FSC meeting a last response of the Russian Federation on 17 April (format F41) to the Ukrainian request on 16 April (format F10) under the Vienna Document. This format of Ukraine provided documented numerous violations by the Russian Federation of the international law as well as the national legislation of Ukraine relating to the airspace of a sovereign state during an active fulfillment of the military reconnaissance on the territory of Ukraine by the Russian side from 11 till 15 April 2015. It is also important to note the observations made in this respect in the last weekly reports by the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk.

In view of the ongoing violations, Ukraine used the tool of the Vienna Document requesting explanations from the Russian Federation (format F10). We deplore that in its reply (format F41) the Russian Federation again refused to provide substantive response to the grounded concerns of the Ukrainian side. The approach of the Russian Federation towards implementation of its commitments on confidence and security building measures runs counter to the letter and spirit of the Vienna Document. If Russia is genuinely interested in peace and full implementation of the Minsk agreements as it declares, it must immediately halt its violations of the airspace of a sovereign state and guarantee no repetition of the above-mentioned unlawful activities.

Madam Chair,

Ukraine consistently implements the algorithm of the Minsk agreements, from de-escalation to political settlement, and continues to see a political solution as the only way out of this conflict. The Ukrainian armed forces ceased fire at agreed date and time, verifiably withdrew heavy artillery, have strictly abided by the cease-fire and have not used arms except for cases of self-defense.

Meanwhile, the Russian Federation has not backed up its commitments by practical steps that would enable de-escalation and peaceful resolution of the situation in the east of Ukraine.

The Russian Federation also continues to fail its commitments under a number of OSCE instruments in politico-military dimension. Numerous attempts since March 2014 to use the FSC mandate and the existing politico-military toolbox to the full extent were undercut by Russia while the situation on the ground had been further escalating, threatening not only Ukraine and its people but also the entire European security architecture. At this first FSC meeting in the second trimester of 2015 we once again urge the Russian Federation to return to the tenets of the fundamental OSCE principles, to respect sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, to reverse annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

We repeat our call for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements by all signatories, including Russia, as the only way forward towards a sustainable political solution. Full respect for the ceasefire regime and a verified withdrawal of heavy weapons are essential steps in the implementation of the Minsk agreements. We once again call for the immediate withdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment, as well as mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine under OSCE monitoring as well as disarmament of all illegal armed groups. We call on Russia to immediately halt exporting terrorism to Ukraine and stop interference into internal affairs of my country.

Thank you, Madam Chair.