



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

Statement on “Russia’s on-going aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea”

As for delivery by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1149th meeting of the Permanent Council,
8 June 2017

Mr. Chairperson,

For over three years the Russian Federation continues its hybrid warfare against the territorial integrity, sovereignty, political unity and independence of Ukraine, flagrantly violating the OSCE principles and commitments and the rules of European security order. In pursuit of its goals of undermining Ukraine’s statehood and forcing Ukraine in Russia’s zone of influence, the Russian Federation applies a variety of instruments to increase the military, political, and economic pressure on my country. On 5 June, Russia conducted snap military exercises near the borders of Ukraine, including the deployment of military units to the temporarily occupied Crimea. Russian state-run propaganda continues to portray the Ukrainian state and Ukrainian nation as Russia’s enemies. As a result of continuous propaganda campaign, 50 per cent of Russian citizens, according to the recent poll of Levada Centre, consider Ukraine to be a hostile nation, placing it top second in the list.

The rise of aggressive nationalism, chauvinism and xenophobia in the Russian Federation stifles the national identity of nearly 5-million Ukrainian minority in the country and eradicates respective Ukrainian institutions. As earlier brought to the attention of the Permanent Council, in the beginning of March this year the authorities of the city of Moscow formally reorganized but de-facto closed the single Library of the Ukrainian literature in Russia. On 5 June, the Meshchansky District Court of Moscow found the director of the library Mrs. Natalia Sharina guilty on trumped-up charges of extremism and embezzlement and ruled on a 4-year suspended sentence. Mrs. Sharina has been under house arrest since the end of October 2015. On the same day the Amnesty International issued a statement emphasizing that this conviction “demonstrates utter contempt for the rule of law and highlights flaws in the independence of Russia’s judiciary”, and pointing out to “the highly charged anti-Ukrainian atmosphere that is prevalent in Russia at the moment”. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine underscored that the sentencing of the director of the Library of the Ukrainian literature in Moscow had yet again demonstrated anti-Ukrainian paranoia of the Russian regime targeting both Ukrainian and Russian citizens.

Distinguished colleagues,

Russia continues fuelling the conflict in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. While the Minsk agreements in their entirety remain the only agreed framework for peaceful resolution and Russia's physical withdrawal from Donbas back to its own territory, Russia's utter disregard for its security and humanitarian commitments blocks progress on the political, social and economic tracks of the Minsk agreements. In April – May 2017, 790 pieces of Russian heavy weapons (191 MLRS "Grad", 181 tanks, 178 self-propelled artillery guns, 173 towed artillery and 67 mortars) were detected by the Ukrainian intelligence within the security zone in violation of the respective withdrawal line. A limited number of states would be able to claim the same military power, which was accumulated by Russia in Donbas to advance its aggressive goals. Some of those weapons are registered by the SMM even under the current self-imposed significant restrictions and the on-going intimidation campaign in the non-government controlled areas. For instance, the SMM report of 3 June informs about 18 howitzers, the report of 5 June informs about ten MLRS Grad, the report of 7 June – about a tank, all in violation of withdrawal lines.

As stated by the SMM in its weekly report of 31 May, the security situation in Donbas remained volatile, with 45 per cent increase of the number of ceasefire violations and continued use of weapons proscribed by the Minsk agreements. The SMM cameras in Avdiivka, Shyrokyne and Oktiabr mine continue to register explosions, tracer rounds and illumination flares coming from the non-government controlled areas of Donbas. The day when the TCG met in Minsk, the Russian hybrid forces fired nearly 900 mortar rounds, over 130 artillery rounds, 25 tank rounds, MLRS missiles.

The hybrid Russian forces do not cease shelling of residential areas and critical civilian infrastructure. In Marinka, as described in the SMM weekly report of 31 May, the pupils and staff from two schools ended their school year by being forced to take shelter in the basement. The village of Krasnohorivka, which was targeted by Russia's heavy weapons, including 152mm artillery, on 25 and 28 May, was again shelled on 4 June: a school and two houses were damaged. Only because the school year is already over in Ukraine, fortunately none of the children were hurt.

The Donetsk Water Filtration Station has once again been left without electricity after the shelling on 1 June, depriving thousands of people of water supply and causing long queues at public water distribution stations. As before, the hybrid Russian forces denied for days the necessary security guarantees for repair works on the electricity lines. This morning South-Donetsk water pump station was shelled endangering water supply to Mariupol and other areas.

Mr. Chairperson,

Progress in implementing the Minsk agreements starting from the very first provision of all three documents, that is sustainable and comprehensive ceasefire, has been stalled by obstructions of the Russian side to the full, safe and unhindered freedom of movement and access of the SMM monitors in the areas under Russia's

effective control. Whereas the Ukrainian authorities are committed to ensuring security of the SMM monitors and assisting the Mission in implementing its mandate, we observe the continuous efforts by Russia and its proxies in Donbas to intimidate the SMM and to nullify the consolidated efforts of Ukraine and the SMM to stabilize the situation along the contact line. There are not only locations, but also the entire areas in the occupied regions of Donbas where the monitors cannot get access to, including the non-government controlled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. As highlighted in the SMM weekly report of 31 May, the Mission's freedom of movement was restricted – apart from areas contaminated with mines and UXO – on 14 occasions, exclusively in the areas controlled by the hybrid Russian forces. The SMM underlined that the illegal armed formations had continued blocking SMM's access to implement its tasks, while accusing the Mission, including through media statements, of not being present to verify violations, civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure.

The SMM reports are very telling in this regard, as they provide a picture of numerous denials of access in the non-government controlled areas of Donbas: in Pervomaisk, where the SMM was not allowed to photograph the new barriers partly obstructing the road, or in Cherkaske mine, when the monitors were following up on reports of presence of heavy weapons, or near Sakhanka, where the SMM could not proceed due to four concrete barriers blocking the road. The SMM's freedom of movement is not only significantly restricted, but also strictly conditioned by imposing escorts on the SMM patrols. Let there be no mistake: the hybrid Russian forces resort to these restrictive measures to enable the monitors to see what the Russians want them to see. Occasionally, despite the impositions and escorts, the SMM monitors can register more, as they did on 5 June, spotting in Trudivske, the neighbourhood of Donetsk, a spent round from a BMP-1 cannon (73 mm) 3-4 meters away from a residential house. As we did before, we again urge the Russian Federation to stop using the residential areas as firing positions.

We condemn Russia's continuous resort to deception. In particular, it took place near Pervomaisk, when an SMM UAV spotted 12 anti-tank mines on the sides of the road, which had been reported by the Russian officers of JCCC and Russia-backed illegal armed formations as removed after the SMM had noticed them earlier on 2 June. As of 5 June, the mines remained in place.

While the hybrid Russian forces continue laying new mines in Donbas in flagrant violation of undertaken commitments, the Ukrainian side remains supportive of the SMM's most recent initiatives to step up efforts on demining activities. In the period of 1 April – 25 May, the Ukrainian side of the JCCC has granted 97 security guarantees for demining and restoration works along the contact line and near the critical infrastructure out of 109 requests received by the JCCC. At the same time the Russian side approved only 25 requests. Some of the demining activities conducted by the Ukrainian side were registered by the SMM near government-controlled Ozerne (SMM report of 3 June) and near a checkpoint east of government-controlled Popasna (SMM weekly report of 31 May).

We urge the Russian side to assume its responsibility as a party to the conflict and a party to the Minsk agreements, to stop the attacks by its hybrid forces in Donbas, to put an end to the threats, harassment and intimidation of the SMM

monitors and to remove all impediments to their freedom of movement in the areas controlled by Moscow and its proxies. As the restrictions persist, the SMM is not able to fully implement its mandate and the respective taskings of the Minsk agreements.

The need to strengthen technical monitoring capacities of the SMM was the major focus of the discussions, which took place yesterday in the course of the visit of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Sebastian Kurz to Ukraine.

Distinguished colleagues,

On 6 June, Ukraine marked the Journalist Day. Reaffirming recognition of the critically important role of pluralistic media for the development of a democratic and prosperous society, we again recalled the dire media situation and persecutions in parts of Ukraine, illegally occupied by the Russian Federation. Ukrainian journalist Mykola Semena remains incarcerated in the temporarily occupied Crimea under fabricated charges while the Russian occupation court in Simferopol continues its show trial. Ukrainian journalist Roman Sushchenko continues to be held in illegal detention in Moscow. We urge Russia to immediately release these journalists and other Ukrainian citizens, held in Russia's detention as political prisoners.

We reiterate our call on the OSCE Chairmanship and relevant OSCE Institutions to use all instruments at the disposal of the Organization to monitor those cases and many other abuses of basic human rights and OSCE commitments taking place in the temporarily occupied Crimea and in Russia itself.

Ukraine expresses strong protest in connection with the recent visit of a group of Russian high-level officials headed by the Chairperson of the Council of the Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation Valentina Matvienko to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine, in a blatant violation of international norms and principles.

We urge Russia to stop its aggression against Ukraine, to implement in good faith its commitments under the Minsk agreements, to reverse the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula, which remains an integral part of Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.