



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Statement in response to the address by Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities Ambassador Vuk Žugić

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1288th meeting of the Permanent Council
5 November 2020

Mr. Chairperson,

Let me join others in expressing deepest sympathies to all affected by recent terrorist attacks in Paris, Kabul and in Vienna.

Let me also wish a speedy recovery to our colleagues and OSCE staff suffering from Covid-19. My condolences go to the family and friends of our colleague, who passed away.

Mr. Chairperson,

We wish to thank Ambassador Žugić for his report providing us with the overview of the Co-ordinator's activities in the second dimension.

The delegation of Ukraine strongly encourages to further pursue important activities as OSCE Co-ordinator on assisting participating States in their efforts to ensure the implementation of the economic and environmental commitments.

We appreciate the efforts of the Chairmanship and the Coordinator to promote such areas of cooperation as anti-corruption, digitalisation and environmental protection. We believe that more OSCE engagement is needed to protect environment, especially in the context of the ongoing conflicts in the OSCE area.

Ukraine welcomes the proposal by the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship to adopt the Ministerial Council decisions on Protection of the Environment and the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources, as well as on Preventing and Combating Corruption through Digitalization and Increased Transparency.

In the context of the draft decision on Preventing and Combating Corruption Through Digitalization and Increased Transparency I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to reiterate that combating corruption remains a priority for my country as being one of the core mechanisms of a sustainable democratic society. Accordingly, we are working together with the Albanian Chairmanship on the elaboration of the possible MC deliverables on this issue, particularly regarding growing role of digitalization, transparency and innovative technologies as effective means of combating corruption.

We are ready to contribute to the joint work leading us to the deliverables at the MC meeting in Tirana.

Dear Ambassador,

As you rightly mentioned in your statement, the “COVID-19” pandemic has an enormous impact on the OSCE actions in all three dimensions of security. We find it disturbing that some participating States try to misuse the COVID-19 related issues for political purposes. In this context it is highly important that the OSCE Co-ordinator within his capacities and mandate doesn't permit any possible attempts to invade the second dimension by the cynical political ideas of certain participating States submitted under the pretext of addressing COVID-19 challenges.

Dear colleagues,

On the eve of November 6, the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed conflict, let me also remind that we are witnessing how the environment, being an integral part of the overall international security, continues to be ignored because of geopolitical ambitions of the certain actors.

The delegation of Ukraine has brought on several occasions to the attention of this Council and other OSCE fora the worrying trends related to the ecological situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

We also expressed our concern because of the lack of proper OSCE attention to this issue as the armed conflicts continue to inflict irreversible damage to the affected regions' ecosystems, and are marked, in particular, by degrading treatment of natural resources, demolition of infrastructural facilities and important health risks for the population.

In the context of the urgent importance of addressing the ecological problems in Crimea and parts of Donbas under the de facto control of the Russian occupation administrations there is an important but not broadly known fact that has to be highlighted.

In 1979 on the territory of the Yunkom mine, which is now in the temporarily occupied Donbas, the Soviet authorities carried out a nuclear explosion: 0.3 kilotons of TNT equivalent. After the explosion, the radioactive capsule was left dry and water was pumped out to prevent radiation from inflowing the surface and groundwater. According to our information, two years ago the occupation administrations stopped pumping water from this mine, and now radioactive water is already entering the layers of drinking water.

As the pumping of water from several dozens of other closed mines has been also stopped, and environmental regulations are being violated at the facilities that are still operating, there is a clear risk of an environmental disaster in the occupied territories of Donbas, and in the southern regions of Russia's Rostov region.

Unfortunately, the situation in Crimea is similar as experts do not exclude that there is a threat of radiation pollution, at least in the Sea of Azov, and the consequences of the ecological catastrophe in the north of Crimea will affect not only Ukraine but the entire Black Sea region, including Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia and Turkey.

The situation is complicated as the international experts are banned by the Russian occupation administrations from entering the occupied territories and assess the real-scale damage.

In this regard in order to prevent further environmental degradation and its consequences we urge the OSCE Secretariat as well as the SMM to enhance their capacities in the environmental monitoring in conflict-affected areas of Donbas

and temporarily occupied Crimea despite all artificial barriers made by the occupying authorities.

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of Ukraine stresses yet again that the OSCE possesses instruments to assist States in overcoming environmental impacts in crisis situations, including by monitoring, assessing and providing relevant recommendations.

We take this opportunity to reiterate our call on the OSCE through its SMM activities for monitoring the ecological situation in the occupied territories of Ukraine, and encourage the OSCE Co-ordinator to contribute to this endeavour in close interaction with the SMM to Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.