



**Permanent Mission of Ukraine**  
to the International Organizations in Vienna

**Statement**  
**in response to H.E. Mr. Miltiadis Varvitsiotis,**  
**Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece,**  
**Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe**

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1276<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
23 July 2020

**Mr. Chairman,**

The delegation of Ukraine warmly welcomes Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe His Excellency Alternate Minister Varvitsiotis to the Permanent Council and thanks him for the comprehensive presentation of the Greek chairmanship priorities in the Council of Europe's statutory decision-making body.

We welcome the Greek chairmanship's priorities relating to the democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights. Ukraine stands ready to contribute to their effective implementation.

**Your Excellency,**

For over six years the European security is severely undermined by the most serious and unprecedented crisis since the end of the Cold war.

This crisis stemmed from the direct armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine which resulted in the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, as well as Russia's military invasion into Ukraine's region of Donbas.

We look forward that under the Greek chairmanship the Committee of Ministers will pursue efforts at strengthening the democratic security in Europe and adequately responding to the current flagrant violation of the norms of international law, the OSCE principles and commitments and the Council of Europe statutory obligations by the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Minister,**

We attach great value to co-operation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe in protecting and promoting the human rights and fundamental freedoms, which represent an essential pillar of security in Europe.

As the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the signing of the European Convention on Human Rights is to be commemorated during the Greek chairmanship, we believe it represents

a great opportunity to bring additional attention to the unconditional obligation of every member State of the Council of Europe to adhere to the principles and values of the Organisation.

The most glaring violations of human rights continue to take place in the illegally occupied territories of Ukraine. In Crimea, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars face systematic violations of their rights and freedoms by the Russian occupation administration. Journalists, religious minorities, human rights defenders and civil society activists are persecuted and repressed. About 100 citizens of Ukraine, most of them Crimean Tatars, are illegally detained or convicted by Russia for political reasons in the territory of the Russian Federation and temporarily occupied Crimea. The number of fake criminal cases against Crimean Tatars continue to grow.

The fate of political prisoners must be of particular concern for the OSCE and the Council of Europe from the human rights perspective.

We take this opportunity to call on the Chairmanships of the OSCE and the Council of Europe to use all instruments at the disposal of the two organizations to achieve release of all Ukrainian political prisoners, currently held behind bars by Russia.

**Your Excellency,**

We fully share one of your country's top priorities identified in face of the COVID-19 pandemic, namely "Effectively responding to a sanitary crisis in full respect for human rights and the principles of democracy and the rule of law".

Amid the on-going armed aggression and de-facto closure of the temporarily occupied territories of Donbas for the OSCE, UN institutions, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian NGOs, local residents became hostages vulnerable to the threat of pandemic.

In fact, Russia fails to take sufficient measures, as an occupying State under the rules of international humanitarian law, to protect the life and health of the population of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, under conditions of the spread of COVID-19. Particularly critical is the situation of the illegally detained persons, who remain deprived of the basic rights and have no access to healthcare.

**Mr. Minister,**

Maintaining security and stability throughout Europe and beyond requires common stands and actions in addressing serious challenges facing our societies.

The establishment of lasting peace and stability in Europe is not possible without enforcing the Russian Federation to respect the rule of law, democracy and human rights.

Having allowed Russia's unconditional return to PACE and with the adoption of the complementary procedure, that in fact impedes the Organization's response to the most serious violations by its members, the Council of Europe demonstrated its reluctance to play an active role in solving the most pressing European issues.

In order to prove the opposite, we expect the Council of Europe not to distance itself from the issue of Russian aggression against Ukraine and to take effective steps to make Russia respect the norms of international law.

In conclusion, I would like to wish H.E. Miltiadis Varvitsiotis every success in Greece's activities at the helm of the Council of Europe.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairman.**