



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 Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1231st meeting of the Permanent Council,
6 June 2019

Mr. Chairman,

Last Monday, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy appointed second President of Ukraine Leonid Kuchma as Head of the Ukrainian delegation in the Trilateral Contact Group, which includes Ukraine and Russia as parties to the conflict and OSCE as mediator. I would recall that L.Kuchma has been representing Ukraine in the TCG for four years, since its establishment and until the last year. His experience, both within the TCG and political one, emphasises Ukraine's responsible attitude to implementing its commitments. Valeriya Lutkovska, Ukraine's Ombudsperson in 2012–2017, will represent Ukraine in the TCG Working Group on Humanitarian Issues.

Ukraine remains devoted to the peaceful resolution of the conflict stemming from Russia's ongoing aggression, including within the activities of the TCG. We expect nothing less from the other party to the conflict, the Russian Federation. It must finally move from unfounded allegations and denials of its responsibility to implementation of its own commitments starting from ceasefire, disengagement, withdrawal of troops, and demining. The litmus test for Russia's readiness to deescalate tensions in Donbas would be its consent to upholding the so-called "harvest ceasefire" to be agreed in the TCG meetings at the initiative of the Ukrainian side.

Whereas the TCG does not cover Crimea, the occupied peninsula remains a big part of the problem, and its de-occupation is to be a big part of the resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders continues to be the only viable and sustainable solution for this conflict, which will restore the confidence of the OSCE community in the Organisation's core principles and norms of international law. It is in everyone's best interest to make this happen, which also requires increased pressure upon Russia to make it abide by its commitments and obligations.

It is important to make sure that the issue of the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine stays in the centre of discussions during the OSCE Informal Ministerial meeting on 9 July.

The most immediate measures, which Russia must undertake to demonstrate its readiness to implement its own commitments, are the release of Ukrainian servicemen and naval vessels according to the provisional measures ordered by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, and revoking the decision on the expedited issuance of the Russian passports for the residents of the occupied parts of Ukraine. We also demand the Russian Federation to stop ignoring the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice aiming at ceasing violation of the Convention on the Eradication of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. As emphasised by the delegation of Ukraine at public hearings taking place these days in the Hague, after two years of Russia's non-compliance with these provisional measures on Crimean Tatar representative institutions and education in the Ukrainian language, the situation has only deteriorated.

Mr. Chairman,

Ukrainian citizens continue to suffer from Russia's unwillingness to cease hostilities. Military positions, residential areas and objects of critical civilian infrastructure remain under fire of the Russian armed formations. In one single day of 4 June, 3 Ukrainian servicemen were killed and 3 were wounded. Yesterday, on 5 June, a Russian sniper killed one Ukrainian serviceman. On 2 June, the SMM spotted "five recent craters assessed as impacts of 152mm artillery rounds fired from a south-easterly direction in a field about 200m south-east of the closest residential houses" in government-controlled Novoivanivka. On 29 May, Bakhmut Agrarian Union's farm near Novoluhanske was again shelled, this time from a mounted grenade launcher. The checkpoint near Betmanove in Donetsk region, closed on 19 May by the Russian armed formations, has not reopened and continues to impact civilians' access to employment, medical assistance and pensions, as confirmed by the SMM. Thousands of people continue to live along the contact line in the government-controlled parts of Donbas under permanent risk of shellings, as Russia refuses to implement its Minsk commitments on the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the contact line agreed in 2014.

Verification of ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons by the SMM remains a challenging task in the conditions of the ongoing Russia's severe restrictions and impediments imposed on the SMM patrols and technical assets, especially in the areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions adjacent to Ukraine's border outside control of the Government and in the southern part of the Donetsk region adjacent to the Sea of Azov. On 1 and 2 June, the SMM was denied passage or ordered to leave immediately after arrival to the border crossing points and entry-exit checkpoints near Voznesenivka, Zaichenko, Pikuzy, Sakhanka, Novoazovsk, and the Chervona Mohyla railway station. These are well-known locations along the established supply routes from the Russian Federation to the territories of Ukraine it occupies, to which the Russian armed formations consistently deny access of the SMM. We urge the Russian side to lift these restrictions and to stop violating SMM's mandate. We call the participating States to attend the Informal Meeting on Ways to

Improve Transparency along the Ukrainian–Russian State Border, planned for 12 June, and to share views on what can be done to reach this scope under Russia’s persistent restrictions.

Mr. Chairman,

On Tuesday, we marked one year since Ukrainian journalist Roman Sushchenko had been unlawfully sentenced on trumped-up charges of “espionage” by Moscow court to 12 years imprisonment in a strict regime colony, in which he is held until now. Two years passed since another Ukrainian journalist Stanislav Aseev was captured by the Russian proxies in Donetsk and thrown behind bars. After his so-called “interview” staged by the Russian fighters last August, we know nothing about his whereabouts and state of health. The SMM or other international missions are not allowed to see him. Both of them were imprisoned by the Russian regime, and numerous calls by the international community, including OSCE RFOM Harlem Désir, to immediately release them, have been entirely ignored. Both of them remain a part of a long list of Kremlin’s victims punished for opposition to or dissent with Russia’s aggression against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. They continue to be used by Russia as hostages, without access of Ukrainian authorities, international observers and human rights defenders, and without proper medical assistance. In the Russia-occupied Crimea, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars live in daily fear to join the ranks of Kremlin’s victims. Last Thursday, two Crimean Tatar activists, Lutfie Zudieva and Mumine Salieva, were detained by the Russian authorities in Crimea and accused of propaganda or public display of extremist organizations, an accusation which the occupation authorities so willingly use in their political persecutions. We urge the Russian side to stop repressions and the practice of intimidating dissenting voices. We urge to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms of the population living in the parts of Ukraine under Russia’s temporary occupation.

We again urge the Russian Federation to reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea 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. Chairman.