



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

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**Statement in response to Ambassador Gyorgy Varga,
Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission
at two Russian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border**

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1198th meeting of the Permanent Council,
18 October 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of Ukraine warmly welcomes Ambassador György Varga, the Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border, back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his report and presentation.

We express our appreciation of the work of the Mission that operates in difficult and restrictive conditions. The OSCE Observer Mission remains limited to two out of eleven checkpoints of the Russian-Ukrainian state border segment not controlled by the Ukrainian authorities, despite objective needs and strong support of the OSCE participating States for expansion of the geographic scope of the Mission and enabling monitoring between these border crossings. Even at these two BCPs significant restrictions of the freedom of movement within the BCPs were imposed by the Russian authorities. We take note of your reference to “blind spots” because of restrictions and prohibitions imposed by the Russian authorities which make it impossible to duly conclude the observation process. In this connection we point out that the OSCE Permanent Council decision No.1130 of 24 July 2014, which established the mission, tasks the “observers, operating under principles of impartiality and transparency, with monitoring and reporting on the situation at the checkpoints of Donetsk and Gukovo, as well as on the movements across the border”. The decision does not make any mention that implementation of the mandated task may be subjected to any restrictions by the authorities of the host country. We urge the Russian authorities to lift restrictions and prohibitions that impede the Mission’s full implementation of its mandate.

Although with limited mandate, small size and significant restriction of the freedom of movement within the BCPs imposed by the Russian authorities, the Mission continues to provide useful information concerning Russia’s support for the illegal armed formations in Donbas. While Russia committed itself to withdraw its military, mercenaries and fighters from Donbas, their illegal flow into Ukraine

continues. During the reporting period 703 crossings of people in military-style outfits from Russia into Ukraine and back were observed. These figures are from only two BCPs to which the Mission has access. It can serve as a mere indication of such traffic that we cannot monitor at the 409 km Ukrainian-Russian state border segment not controlled by the Ukrainian authorities.

Further indications are provided by the SMM. Last week during three consecutive nights the SMM registered the convoys with military trucks and equipment crossing the border through green sections where there are no crossing points. In August-September the SMM reported the presence in occupied areas of Donbas of modern Russian military equipment that has never been on the inventory of Ukrainian Armed Forces. In particular, the SMM weekly report of 14 August reported on “four distinct electronic warfare systems (a Leer-3RB-341V, a 1L269 Krasukha-2, a RB-109A Bylina and an anti-UAV system, Repellent-1) near non-government-controlled Chornukhyne, all seen for the first time by the SMM”. These military systems could only arrive from the territory of the Russian Federation.

Russian citizens acting as foreign fighters or mercenaries continue to fight against the Ukrainian authorities in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine in Russia-instigated conflict. The Russian Government conceals Russian casualties. A fraction of them is revealed by reports of the OSCE Observer Mission, in particular about 29 ambulances, crossing from Ukraine into Russia during the reporting period. Russia's actions continue to breach the Minsk agreements as well as the OSCE principles and commitments, in particular regarding sovereignty and territorial integrity, inviolability of frontiers, border security and combating terrorism.

Mr. Chairperson,

We condemn in the strongest terms the Russian practice of sending the so-called “humanitarian convoys” in violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the principles of international humanitarian law. It is notable that during the reporting period 5 Russian convoys violated Ukraine's border at the Donetsk BCP, but since 22 August 2014 the OM observed 79 such convoys. We insist that the humanitarian assistance be delivered based on the international mechanism as envisaged by the Minsk agreements. We again strongly urge the Russian Federation to send deliveries of humanitarian nature through border check-points, controlled by the Government of Ukraine. The failure by Russia to do so further demonstrates the interest to hide the real content of the deliveries.

Mr. Chairperson,

The violence, perpetrated by Russian armed formations in the Donbas region of Ukraine, underlines the imperative of comprehensive border monitoring in connection with continued flows of military equipment and personnel from Russia in the non-government controlled areas of Donbas. We emphasise the utmost relevance of the Minsk Protocol of 5 September 2014 whereby the signatories committed themselves to ensure permanent monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian border and verification by the OSCE with the creation of security zones in the border regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation. This is a very clear commitment, co-signed by

Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE, but which has not yet been realized in view of Russian opposition. Pre-empting the usual misleading remarks by the Russian delegation, we wish to stress that this is not a matter of so-called “good-will” on the part of the Russian Federation, but a matter of fulfilling the undertaken commitments.

We welcome the informal consultations held yesterday by the Chairmanship on measures to improve transparency in the part of the Ukrainian-Russian state border currently not controlled by the Ukrainian government.

Russia`s position on this issue serves as litmus test of Russia`s readiness to peacefully resolve the conflict which it started. Taking into account the urgent need for further effective measures to defend the founding OSCE principles and to strengthen the conflict resolution efforts, we encourage the OSCE Chairmanship to put for adoption of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Milan a draft decision on OSCE monitoring and transparency at the segment of the border between Ukraine and Russia adjacent to Donetsk and Luhansk oblast of Ukraine.

In conclusion, we once again thank Ambassador György Varga and his able team for their dedicated work and wish every success in their future activities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.