



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

**Statement in response to the CIO Special Representative in Ukraine and TCG Ambassador Mikko Kinnunen and SMM Chief Monitor Yasar Halit Cevik**

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1355<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council

17 February 2022

**Mr. Chairperson,**

We join other delegations in welcoming CIO Special Representative Mikko Kinnunen and SMM Chief Monitor Halit Cevik to be with us at the Permanent Council.

And I also would like to praise the important work done by the SMM's able team under current challenging circumstances. Ambassador Cevik, please, pass our words of support and appreciation to all members of the SMM.

We strongly believe that preserving of the efficient and full-fledged monitoring by OSCE SMM on the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, especially in the border areas is of foremost importance.

And we appreciate efforts by the participating States aimed to keep SMM's monitoring capability at an appropriate level, despite the current security challenges.

**Distinguished colleagues,**

Russia's significant military build-up, unprecedented impediments to maritime trade in the Black Sea under a pretext of military drills, the use of hybrid toolkit, especially cyber-attacks on Ukraine's critical infrastructure, pose direct security threat to Ukraine and Europe as a whole.

In these circumstances, we rely in particular on the OSCE mechanisms of conflict cycle, risk reduction and enhancing military transparency. Personal engagement of the OSCE Chair, Minister Rau, and Secretary General Schmid are appreciated in this regard.

We also appreciate efforts of Germany and France which have contributed to resumption of the meetings of the N4 diplomatic advisers. Both in Paris and Berlin, Ukraine focused, among other things, on the task of unblocking the work of the TCG.

Since the TCG and the SMM are at the forefront of our endeavours, the presentations made today by distinguished Ambassadors Cevik and Kinunen were especially useful and timely.

However, while Ukraine, its partners and OSCE are closely working on the revival of diplomatic settlement; the Russian side keeps its destructive position.

The approval by the Russian State Duma of an appeal to president Putin to recognize the so-called "republics" is one of such latest examples. It is yet again an act against Ukraine's sovereignty and undermines the integrity of the Minsk agreements Russia has signed under.

It is not by accident that this decision coincided with the ongoing Russia's military build-up and new threats of use of force against Ukraine. But if Moscow is serious about diplomatic efforts, the State Duma has to withdraw its appeal.

And let me put it as simple as it is. We would not buy Russia's attempts to mask the Russian occupation administration in Donetsk and Luhansk as "independent entities", or to disguise its own involvement as a party to the armed conflict in Donbas.

We also took note that the Russian leadership continues to spread a narrative about the preparation by Ukraine of offensive campaigns in Donbas. It is not true.

When the Russian delegation will start again accusing Ukraine of preparing something, it is important to ask the Russians about this morning intensification of shelling along the entire contact line, and in particular about shelling of Stanytsia Luhanska, just an hour before our meeting started here in Vienna. A kindergarten was targeted. With a direct artillery fire. When children were in the building. Currently, we are waiting for a confirmation about adults and children being allegedly injured. What are Russian illegal armed formations doing to cover its crime? Right, they are starting accusing Ukraine. We have seen such tactics and the same playbook on many occasions. We believe, it is time to end these atrocities, it is time for relevant assessment and restrictive measure to motivate Russia to stop these shellings.

To understand from where a real threat for Donbas is stemming from, it is enough to compare life in Sloviansk, which endured three months of occupation, with living conditions in occupied Antratsyt. Their realities are completely different.

Obviously, Moscow is creating a false political context, including with the passportization, for Russia's future new interventions.

But instead of blackmailing Ukraine, we encourage the Russian side to focus on the implementation of all agreements reached by the leaders of Ukraine, Germany, France and Russia, including at the summit in Paris in 2019.

The decisions that are long overdue from the Russian side include permanent ceasefire, withdrawal of forces and equipment, operationalisation of the crossing points across the contact line, and mutual release of detainees.

At the same time, a few days ago, the Russian Foreign Ministry argued that under current circumstances the SMM's monitoring activities in full compliance with its mandate are as important as never before. I cannot help but agree with that.

There are, at least, a number of urgent steps, which, if taken, would help the Mission to operate safely and fulfil its mandate properly as tasked by the Permanent Council. These steps are fully in competence and powers of the Russian Federation.

First, faithful engagement of the Russian Federation in confidence building measures, as VDoc provides for, would help to address security concerns about the presence of the Russian troops along Ukraine's border.

Bringing, referring to different sources, from 87 to 100 battalion tactical groups or from 126500 up to 150000 troops to Ukraine's border can hardly be described as routine practice. We call the Russian delegation to reconsider its position and participate in a joint meeting of the PC and FSC tomorrow in order to provide all necessary explanations. As I just said, even numbers are different. We need answers.

Second, it is almost eight years as we have been talking about the need to respect ceasefire regime – the very basic provision of all three Minsk agreements. Even despite some positive note about observed a 60 per cent drop in the number of ceasefire violations following TCG meeting on 22 December, real situation remains volatile including because of the use by the Russian armed formations of sniper fire and UAVs to attack the Ukrainian positions. In this particular period of time 3 our servicemen were killed. Two more were fatally wounded by mines. It means that decrease in number of CFVs does not always mean more secure situation.

But this regime cannot be sustainable and lasting when ammunition, weaponry and manpower supplies have never stopped from Russia and the issue of border monitoring, as Minsk protocol provides for, has been blocked for years.

However, normalization of the security situation will pave the way towards unblocking of other issues pertaining to political settlement of the conflict.

Third, mine clearance activities are long-overdue. According to the SMM report, pupils in occupied settlements of Berehove and Khriashchivka, Luhansk region, cannot use their usual road to school allegedly due to mine contamination. Mission itself cannot use all available routes due to mine risk. But it could be easily addressed, once respective political will is demonstrated in the TCG.

We call upon the Russian Federation to work towards finalizing this commitment related to the implementation of the security-related conclusions of the Normandy Four Summit of December 2019. Progress on the finalization of an updated mine action plan would be an important step for improving security environment for both – civilians and SMM personnel.

Fourth, it is chronic restrictions to the Mission's freedom of movement. In the occupied territories it amounts to 92%, as assessed by the Mission itself. Threatening SMM members with arrest at the BCP Dovzhanske was unacceptable and gross violation of the SMM mandate.

In this context we call to end delays and denials of access, especially in southern Donetsk region and in border areas of Ukraine. The proliferation of checkpoints and associated formalities, as well as new COVID-related restrictions imposed on SMM must be revoked. Roads, especially in Luhansk region, have to be reopened. All these measures would make logistic planning of the Mission much easier and much safer.

Fifth, the safety of SMM technical arsenals should be secured. We welcome the full resumption of long-range UAV flights since 23 December. However, we are concerned that 81 per cent of the flights have still experienced jamming.

The withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine of the Russian modern electronic warfare systems, including Zhitel, Krasukha-2 or Leer-3 and other systems, would significantly contribute to improving the environment for the use of the SMM UAVs.

Sixth, let's start working on the practical implementation of the concept note, prepared by the SMM last year. The Mission asked for our support in areas where it faces the biggest challenges. And we, as participating States, have to provide such support. Opening of additional FPBs, equipping SMM with new technical means, including cameras and UAVs, would help to increase efficiency of the monitoring and would contribute to preventing any escalation.

And last but not least, both mandate and budget of the Mission should be smoothly passed by the Council and our negotiations should not be preconditioned with some political requests that go against the SMM's mandate and commitments of the participating State to respect sovereignty and territorial integrity of each other.

### **Excellencies,**

We are also concerned about socio-economic situation in the occupied territories. In particular, we are worried that job offers and access to social services are used to force people to obtain the Russian Federation passports. We encourage the Mission to keep further attention to these aspects of the conflict. On the other hand, we called upon the Russian Federation to respect its obligations under the Minsk agreements and cease illegal passportization in Ukraine's regions.

At the same time, Russia is stepping up threats in the Black Sea region. Russia's move to block parts of the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait under the pretext of military exercises serves as an example of these threats. This severely undermines international navigation and commercial shipping in both seas, leading to adverse economic consequences in the region and for Ukrainian ports in particular.

These developments give newfound relevance to our previous requests to the SMM to report on socio-economic consequences of Russia's maritime blockade.

This large-scale militarization of the region also brings us to the upcoming eighth anniversary of the occupation by the Russian Federation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and reminds of the importance of comprehensively addressing the complex challenges, including with respect to the human rights and fundamental freedoms, associated with occupied Crimea.

In this regard we welcome interviewing people at the administrative boundary line with Crimea, as outlined in the report, and encourage the Mission to further develop this practice.

### **Distinguished colleagues,**

I wish to conclude my statement once again with words of gratitude to Ambassador Cevik and brave women and men working in the SMM OSCE.

And I would like also to reassure Ambassador Kinnunen of Ukraine's continuous support for your efforts within the TCG.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**