



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Six years of illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1260th meeting of the Permanent Council,
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Mr. Chairperson,

We raised this current issue today to draw additional attention of the OSCE participating States to the ongoing illegal occupation and attempted annexation of Ukraine's Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation. Six years ago, using its military advantage and nuclear power status, Russia sent by air and sea thousands of its militaries to seize the Crimean peninsula. Ukrainian legitimate authorities were dismantled, occupation structures installed, and 2.5 mln Ukrainian citizens remained trapped in Crimea. After initial denial of the use of Russian regular troops and special forces for the purposes of armed aggression against a neighbour country, Russia's leadership has later admitted this fact. This has not yet happened in Donbas, where the Russian Federation continues pretending non-involvement into daily fighting resulting in casualties and damages to infrastructure.

Yesterday, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy declared 26 February the Day of Resistance to Occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol. This day will be celebrated annually. While addressing participants of the Age of Crimea 2020 forum, the Head of Ukrainian state stressed that the return of Crimea to Ukraine is the key to security on the planet and represents restoration of trust into international law and justice.

In this connection, let me remind that Crimea became the first case since the end of the Second World War in Europe, when a part of the territory of one state was occupied and an attempt of annexation was made by another state. As underlined in the statement of the MFA of Ukraine of 20 February 2020, I quote, "by its illegal actions, Russia has violated the core principles of international law underpinning international relations in the modern world, which provide for peace and stability, that is the principles of refraining from the threat or use of force, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of the independent states, as well as inviolability of frontiers", end of quote. Twenty-three years of good-neighbourly relations with Russia, which Ukraine was trying hard to develop after regaining independence in 1991, meant nothing for Kremlin's regime, which has flagrantly breached numerous

bilateral and multilateral treaties and agreements, to which Ukraine and Russia were parties. Among them, I wish to draw your particular attention to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on security assurances to Ukraine, in which the Russian Federation committed to respect existing borders of Ukraine and to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine. This breach of security assurances will have a long-standing negative impact on the nuclear non-proliferation efforts.

Russia's total disregard to the international law and its own commitments has severely undermined security order, multilateral cooperation and security perceptions in Europe and in the world. Many states, following acts of armed aggression by the Russian Federation against Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, now feel significantly less secure, as it is hardly possible to predict when and where the Kremlin's regime will take the decision to use its military force beyond Russia's borders. This resulted in particular into the increased mistrust and lack of cooperation inside of the OSCE, which we all observe in our activities, negotiations and attempts to use fully the OSCE potential as a regional security organization.

For six years, the Russian Federation has been telling us, including here in Vienna, about a so-called "new political-legal reality" and that the issue of Crimea is now "off the table". These vain efforts have not produced any results. On the contrary, the dire situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the occupied Crimean peninsula, as well as severe security challenges brought by Russia's intensive militarization of Crimea and surrounding waters of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, remain in a spotlight of the international community. Every year, the UN General Assembly, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, many other influential international bodies, in which the Russian Federation doesn't have a blocking vote, adopt new documents highlighting the scale of Russia's violations of the international law and reminding Moscow of its obligations as an occupying Power. We reiterate our gratitude to all participating States providing diplomatic and political support to Ukraine, including in the weekly discussions on illegal occupation of Crimea, which we hold during the meetings of the Permanent Council.

Peace and security cannot be taken as granted. If they are undermined, we should not appease the aggressor and pretend nothing has happened. Russia's unwillingness to follow the rules, combined with the absence of military solutions to its actions as occupying Power, must not lead to total dismantling of the European security order. Instead, we need to preserve our unity, including by strong and effective non-recognition policy, sanctions regime and the use of all available OSCE mechanisms and assets. We must restore respect for international law. If this means maintaining and strengthening multifaceted pressure on the aggressor State, this is the way we should follow.

We continue to strongly condemn Russia's aggression, illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and numerous gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law in the occupied territory. We urge Russia to reverse the illegal occupation and return to the tenets of international law.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.