



**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 Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1243<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
10 October 2019

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Since the recommitment to ceasefire entered into force on 21 July and until the end of September, the armed provocations by the Russian armed formations in Donbas left 26 Ukrainian servicemen dead and 75 wounded. The SMM reports confirm the growing number of ceasefire violations, as well as Minsk-proscribed weapons and heavy weapons outside of designated storage sites, predominantly in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas. This testifies to Russia's sustained failure to implement its own commitments on the security provisions of the Minsk agreements.

The dire security situation along the contact line requires immediate improvement. With this in mind, Ukraine continues its tireless efforts to stop hostilities and bring peace back to Donbas, even when these efforts are not reciprocated by the other party to the conflict, the Russian Federation. On 1 October, at the TCG meeting in Minsk, the Ukrainian side agreed to renew, starting from 7 October, the disengagement of forces and hardware in the Zolote and Petrivske areas. However, on 6 October, the day before the planned renewal, the Russian armed formations broke the arrangement and shelled Zolote disengagement area. In accordance with the TCG Framework Decision relating to disengagement of forces and hardware, a comprehensive ceasefire during seven days must be ensured with verification by the SMM as a precondition for disengagement of forces and hardware. Thus, this violation by the Russian side will postpone the beginning of disengagement till the comprehensive ceasefire be observed for seven days. We urge the Russian side to fulfil its obligations.

The disengagement must be followed by implementation of other security provisions of the Minsk agreements, that are withdrawal of foreign armed formations and mercenaries, disarmament of all illegal groups, as well as reinstatement of border control by the government of Ukraine. Ensuring security, in particular, is a must for establishing necessary conditions for launching the electoral process and holding local elections in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas in full compliance with Ukrainian legislation and full accordance with the OSCE standards. Ukrainian political parties must be able to campaign and participate, Ukrainian media must enjoy free functioning, IDPs must have the possibility to vote for the people who would represent them, and Ukrainian institutions and bodies of power must be fully operational. All of this is impossible under the foreign occupation. Finally, comprehensive monitoring by

OSCE/ODIHR remains critical for organizing free, democratic, fair and transparent elections.

Ensuring unbiased international monitoring is a key to achieving progress in resolving the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Unless we know exactly what happens on the ground, we are not able to assess the current situation and to identify the ways to improve it. Safe and secure access of the SMM throughout Ukraine, in particular to the territories near the temporary uncontrolled segment of the border with Russia, in full accordance with the mandate of the SMM, must be ensured. As the Mission continues facing frequent restrictions, limitations and denials of access in Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine, we remind the Russian side of its responsibility to stop violating the SMM mandate. The access of monitors should not be selective. The ground patrols must enjoy freedom of movement whenever the Mission deems necessary, not only when it is convenient for the Russian proxies.

The most systematic restrictions continue to take place in the areas adjacent to Ukraine's border outside control of the Government, in which the SMM regularly registers illegal crossings of the border, trade and military activities. On the night of 3 October, an SMM long-range UAV spotted trucks moving on dirt road near Manych leading to the border with the Russian Federation where there are no border crossing facilities. I would remind that a year ago, in October 2018, a long-range UAV was lost in this area after spotting a convoy of seven trucks. Before that, and after that, these illegal convoys continued. While delivering pretentious speeches on the necessity to reach peace in Ukraine, the Russian Federation maintains its supplies to the illegal armed formations in Donbas, fuelling violence, casualties and destruction of the infrastructure. Recently, the SMM reported on trains with coal bearing administrative numbers of the Russian Federation and logos of Russia-registered companies in the occupied city of Debaltseve. It is notable that a military-type communication truck was spotted by the SMM close to the railway workshop buildings. We thank the SMM for these findings and encourage the Mission to continue paying special attention to the railway hubs and transit routes in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The Ukrainian authorities are determined to alleviate sufferings of Ukrainian citizens caused by the ongoing Russian aggression, to reach them even across the contact line and to urge the Russian Federation, an occupying Power, to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms of the local population living under occupation. A part of these efforts is the ongoing reconstruction of the bridge near Stanytsia Luhanska, which after completion of repair works in the next few weeks will significantly simplify crossing the contact line in that area. On 7 October, President of Ukraine signed the decree aimed at facilitating crossing entry-exit checkpoint in Stanytsia Luhanska and other EECPs along the contact line. We remind the Russian side that another EECP in Luhansk region, Zolote, stands ready to be opened yet since March 2016. We urge the Russian side to let this happen.

We remain concerned on the deteriorating situation with observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas. On 30 September and 1 October, the SMM patrols were denied access to educational facilities both in Luhansk and Donetsk regions, as the staff of facilities told monitors that "they were not allowed to communicate with the SMM and that the SMM should address any possible

queries to those in control”. We once again call on “those in control”, that is the Russian side and its proxies, to stop violating the Mission’s mandate. It must be free to gather information, to establish facts and to report them to the participating States. We also address the Russian delegation to clarify the purposes of the so-called “population survey” currently held in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas, on which the SMM reported on 7 October. Personal information of the residents of the occupied territories must not be used for intimidating them and violating their rights and freedoms.

These days, the 207<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO Executive Board is taking place in Paris. During it, a regular report of the UNESCO Director-General on the situation in the temporarily occupied Crimea in the fields of education, science, culture, dissemination of information and media development will be presented. This document states the ongoing deterioration of the situation in the peninsula in all UNESCO’s fields of competence, providing concrete facts of flagrant violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, most notably of Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars. It specifies breaches of educational and cultural rights, impediment to the free dissemination of information and media activities, numerous cases of persecution and illicit arrests of journalists by the Russian occupation authorities. According to the UNESCO assessment, “by early July 2019, the active use of Russian legislation “on counteracting extremism and separatism” as a pretext to ban journalists activities, as well as show trials of journalists and activists disagreeing with the occupation of Crimea, have in fact completed the process of cleansing the Crimean information landscape of free expression”. To mention only a few facts, the Ukrainian media in Crimea were stripped of their licenses and replaced on air by Russian TV and radio channels, access to 60 Ukrainian websites in Crimea was blocked, and the existing internet network equipment on the peninsula was entirely substituted by the communications facilities provided and controlled by Russia.

We witness similar reports provided by the Ukrainian NGOs. The Crimean Human Rights Group, a public non-profit organization of the Crimean human rights defenders and journalists, underlines in its review on the human rights situation in Crimea that the Russian occupation authorities deny access to information to the local population. Russia-controlled media landscape is full of intolerance towards Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars, and religious minorities. Kremlin’s propaganda replaced the plurality of views. It promotes the hate speech towards those who dare to speak against the ongoing occupation. This is unacceptable.

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. Chairperson.**