



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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Statement
in response to H.E. Ioannis Kasoulides,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cyprus

As delivered by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1129th meeting of the Permanent Council,
26 January 2017

Mr. Chairman,

I join previous speakers in warmly welcoming the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cyprus, H.E. Ioannis Kasoulides at the meeting of the Permanent Council and thank him for the comprehensive presentation that he shared with us today in his capacity as Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. While aligning itself with the EU statement, the Delegation of Ukraine would like to make some remarks in its national capacity.

Mr. Minister,

For the last nearly three years both the Council of Europe and the OSCE have sought to address the most serious crisis since the end of the Cold war.

This crisis stemmed from armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, resulting in the illegal occupation by Russia of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, as well as conflict in Ukraine's region of Donbas. By resorting to aggression against Ukraine the Russian Federation flagrantly violated the norms of international law, the OSCE principles and political commitments and the Council of Europe legally-binding obligations. Notably, the attempted annexation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia is the first instance in Europe since World War Two when a country uses force to expand its own territory.

In Donbas Russia, in defiance of its Minsk commitments, continues to resort to violence and heavy weaponry aiming to force Ukraine into submission and deny the freedom of the Ukrainian people to make their own choices.

The matter of utmost concern is the situation with human rights in the occupied Crimea and certain areas of Donbas controlled by the Russian regular forces and Russia's backed terrorist armed groups. The international human rights monitoring missions reports of systematic violations of rights of Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians,

persecution of journalists, human rights defenders and activists, illegal detentions, enforced disappearances, tortures and killings, that remain without investigation.

The Russian Federation denies access to the illegally occupied territory for international human rights monitoring mechanisms. In these circumstances we see the urgent need to engage the conventional monitoring mechanisms of the Council of Europe to make a comprehensive assessment of the situation.

Many times the Council of Europe has stressed that a sustainable political solution must be based on full respect for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We are convinced that every effort should be made to bring to an end grave human rights violations committed by Russia and restore the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

In the light of serious violation of the fundamental human rights in Crimea we would like to underline the importance of consolidation of efforts of the international organisations, in particular the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the United Nations in monitoring the human rights situation in Crimea.

Mr. Minister,

A number of Ukrainian citizens remain behind bars in Russia under fabricated charges, including Oleh Sentsov, Oleksandr Kolchenko, Mykola Karpyuk, Stanislav Klykh and others. They are all political prisoners in Russia. It is essential to keep focus on this unacceptable situation and use all instruments available to facilitate their immediate and unconditional release.

Russia's defiance of the established rules and norms in relations between states cannot be viewed in isolation from Russia's departure from its international commitments and obligations on the standards of respect for human rights and freedoms inside the country.

The independent human rights organizations assess the current climate to be the most oppressive in the history of modern Russia.

The deteriorating situation with human rights and democracy in Russia warrants preparation of a comprehensive report on the country's compliance with its international obligations, which it assumed when joining the Council of Europe in 1996.

Your Excellency,

We look forward that under Cyprus Chairmanship the Committee of Ministers will continue efforts to strengthen democratic security in Europe and adequately respond to violations of international law and obligations undertaken within the Council of Europe.

We wish the Cyprus Chairmanship every success in implementing its important priorities and assure of support on the part of Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.