



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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**Statement on “Russia’s on-going aggression against Ukraine
and illegal occupation of Crimea”**

As delivered by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1100th meeting of the Permanent Council,
12 May 2016

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset I would like to thank the Chair for presenting the views of the host country in relation to yesterday’s Normandy Ministerial meeting in Berlin. We highly value the mediation efforts of Germany and France in this framework and their dedication to contribute to the peaceful resolution of the Russia-fuelled conflict on the Ukrainian territory in Donbas. Ukraine’s assessments in this regard will be outlined in our statement.

The developments on the ground were in the focus of the Ministers’ discussion yesterday as the security situation fails our expectations, based on the statement of the Trilateral Contact group on full and comprehensive ceasefire to come into effect on the eve of the Easter holidays. The SMM reported on the high number of the ceasefire violations on several days over the past week.

Armed provocations by the combined Russian-separatist forces, including shellings, sniper fire, subversive activities and direct attacks on Ukrainian positions, remain the main aggravating factor, even despite their lesser intensity. For instance, on 7 May the Russia-backed militants attacked the Ukrainian forces in the vicinity of the village of Taramchuk, following a two-day intensive shelling by 120 mm caliber mortars. The attack was repelled and the militants were forced to retreat. Avdiyivka industrial zone remains a hotspot, where provocative attacks by the combined Russian-separatist forces continued unabated. The SMM reported on a significant number of ceasefire violations in this area by mortars, including 23 mortar impacts targeting Avdiyivka on 7 May.

As a result the toll of casualties continues to steadily grow. Just on 8-10 May four Ukrainian servicemen were killed and nine were wounded.

We note that Russia and its proxies utterly ignored the stance of the SMM and the international community over the so-called “Victory Day parades” in Donetsk and Luhansk, which brought heavy weaponry into the streets. We strongly condemn this deliberate violation of the Minsk agreements, which also showed that the heavy weapons in the occupied areas of Donbas, including tanks, heavy artillery and MRLS,

have never been verifiably withdrawn despite the commitments of Russia and its proxies under the Minsk agreements.

Distinguished colleagues,

The urgent need to put an end to the security degradation in the conflict-affected areas, in particular by full and good-faith implementation of the initial security provisions of the Minsk agreements, was the main message of the Ukrainian side at the yesterday's Normandy Ministerial meeting in Berlin. We regret that two months after the Paris meeting the Ministers were again to focus on the same problems relating to ensuring sustainable and comprehensive ceasefire, withdrawal of heavy weapons and unfettered OSCE monitoring. The underlying reason is Russia's ongoing failure to abide by its commitments.

The persistent impediments to the SMM monitoring and verification activities by the combined Russian-separatist forces seriously undermine the efficiency of de-escalation efforts. During the past week the Mission again reported on numerous cases of freedom-of-movement restrictions that the OSCE monitors faced in the occupied areas of Donbas. We note with concern the increased number of such restrictions over 4 – 9 May, again with over 85% of them in the occupied areas.

We condemn continuing militants' attempts to intimidate the OSCE monitors to limit their monitoring activities. All incidents, recently reported by the Mission, including gun threats at the militants' checkpoints and car pursuit of the SMM vehicles in Donetsk, are entirely unacceptable. Yesterday in Berlin Minister Klimkin reiterated that the SMM must be able to perform unhindered monitoring and verification.

This includes, in particular, removal of all limitations for the SMM monitoring at the Ukrainian-Russian border in the occupied areas of Donbas. The SMM reports testify that the situation with border access has not been improving and the Mission was able to make very few conditioned visits. The SMM's access to the places, which are reported to serve as points of transit or destination of weaponry supplies, remains strictly restricted. An exemplary incident took place at the closed BCP "Izvarine", where the SMM arrived to follow up on reports that new hardware and ammunition had been delivered, but was immediately forced to leave the area.

Minister Klimkin reiterated yesterday to his Russian counterpart and the mediating Ministers of Germany and France that the developments in Donbas over 2014-2016 have made it very clear that the uncontrolled border continuously generated instability and violence on the ground. It remains a significant factor calling for qualitative improvement of the international engagement and toolbox, assigned to respond to the conflict in Donbas.

In Berlin Ukraine proposed a three-stage plan, which envisages establishing the OSCE SMM bases close to the border, equipping them with necessary technical means to monitor the areas of concern, including transport routes and hubs, and deploying the OSCE monitors at the BCPs on the Ukrainian side.

We see need for deployment of an armed police mission in the areas of withdrawal of heavy weapons and along the uncontrolled sections of the Ukrainian-Russian border to contribute to establishment of safe and secure environment in Donbas, adequate for progress on the political aspects of the resolution. The Ministers were not able to agree yesterday on required modalities and elements of mandate of such a mission. At the same time we consider the readiness to continue discussion on the matter an important outcome of the Berlin meeting.

Mr.Chairman,

In the humanitarian area the Ukrainian authorities continue their efforts aimed at facilitating the movement through the contact line for the civilian population of Donbas. However, we continue to confront attempts of sending subversive groups and weapons from the occupied areas of Donbas to other parts of Ukraine for destabilization, including by carrying out terrorist attacks. For instance, on 6 May, the Ukrainian law enforcement detained a car with TNT blocks and anti-personnel mines near the village of Hranitne. A subversive attempt was prevented in Mariupol, where the law-enforcement discovered on 8 May a cache with grenade launchers, grenades and about 2500 pieces of ammunition. Another cache, containing an “Igla” air defence system, was discovered in Shchastia, Luhansk region.

We urge unblocking the process of release of hostages and illegally detained persons. We consider it unacceptable to use hundreds of people as an instrument for blackmailing Ukraine and the international community and urge Russia to speedily implement paragraph 5 of the Minsk Package of measures.

The above provision applies equally to all Ukrainian citizens, who are held in illegal detention in Russia. One of them is a member of the Ukrainian Parliament and a PACE member Nadiya Savchenko, who celebrated yesterday her birthday, already second in Russia’s incarceration. We note the cynical behavior of the Russian authorities, which did not allow Nadiya’s mother to visit the daughter on her birthday.

Distinguished colleagues,

Since the beginning of Russia’s illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol the issue of Crimea has been closely associated with flagrant violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms and targeted repressions.

It is telling about the brutality of Moscow’s policy towards the illegally occupied peninsula that a resident of the Russian city of Tver Andrey Bubeyev was sentenced a few days ago to 2 years and 3 months in prison for reposting a publication, entitled “Crimea is Ukraine”, on a social network. This is just one example when a person taking in Russia the side of international law is criminally prosecuted and thrown into jail.

In Crimea, the Russian occupying authorities continue to consolidate their policy of repressions, targeting mostly the representatives of the Ukrainian and the Crimean Tatar communities. The Delegation of Ukraine will deliver today a separate statement on the upcoming sad anniversary of 1944 deportation of the Crimean Tatars by the Soviet regime.

We again urge the Russian Federation, as an occupying power, to take responsibility for stopping all human rights violations on the peninsula and to allow free and unconditional access for permanent international monitoring in Crimea.

Mr.Chairman,

We regret that until now Moscow showed no readiness to abide by its commitments under the Minsk agreements and to practically contribute to the resolution of the conflict it created. Against this backdrop it remains critically important to maintain political and economic sanctions to stimulate Moscow's return to the tenets of international law.

We urge the Russian Federation to immediately take practical steps to implement its Minsk commitments on peaceful resolution in Donbas and to exert its influence on the militants it supports to do likewise.

We urge Russia to halt its aggression against Ukraine and reverse the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

Thank you, Mr.Chairman.