



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

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

As for delivery by the Delegation of Ukraine  
to the 1150<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
22 June 2017

**Mr. Chairperson,**

We start today by condemning in the strongest terms the armed attack of Russian hybrid fighters on the SMM monitors on 20 June in the non-government controlled Yasynuvata. The use of an automatic assault rifle in the attack by firing in the air and at the SMM patrol vehicle, putting at gunpoint the monitors and attempt to break the side window of the patrol vehicle with a gunstock represented an unprecedented level of threat to unarmed civilian monitors. This attack was an appalling manifestation of the climate of impunity cultivated by Russia and its hybrid forces in the occupied areas of Donbas in relation to attacks, threats and intimidations, directed at the SMM monitors in the recent months. This latest outrageous attack was preceded only few days earlier by an intimidating incident on 8 June near non-government controlled Oleksandrivske, when the SMM patrol was encircled by six vans and one bus, none of which had licence plates, with the armed men in balaclavas and hoods, and on 13 June when Russia-backed militants twice per day pulled a spike trip chain in front of the SMM vehicles. We emphasise Russia’s responsibility for stopping threats and intimidations, bringing the responsible to account and providing for safety and security of the SMM in the areas of Donbas, which are under Russia’s effective control. These are the commitments stipulated by the SMM mandate and the Minsk agreements, signed but not implemented by Russia.

**Mr. Chairman,**

As Russia’s aggression against Ukraine persists, the level of violence along the contact line in Donbas remains unacceptably high. The ceasefire violations recorded in Donetsk and Luhansk regions increased by about 75 per cent compared with the previous week, as stated in the SMM weekly report of 14 June. The number of conflict-related civilian casualties is growing fast: as highlighted in the latest OHCHR report, 193 of them (36 deaths and 157 injuries) took place within the period between 16 February and 15 May 2017, 48 per cent increase compared with the previous reporting period. Overall, since 14 April 2014, the OHCHR recorded more

than 34 thousand casualties, including military (over 10 thousand killed and 24 thousand injured). This is the tragic human cost of Russia's invasion into Ukraine and flagrant violation of the rules-based security order.

The residential areas of Donbas continue to be targeted by high caliber artillery of the Russian hybrid forces, as confirmed by the SMM reports, including in government-controlled Olhynka (40km south-west of Donetsk), where the SMM saw on 14 June numerous impact sites of 152mm artillery rounds fired from the non-government controlled areas. The gas pipeline to Avdiivka was damaged leaving the town without gas supply for two weeks now. The geography of Russia's military provocations expands as last week the town of Shchastya and the Luhansk thermal electric power station (which is the only energy supplier for the North of Luhansk region) were deliberately shelled.

The violence is sustained by uninterrupted flows to Donbas of Russian mercenaries, weapons, ammunition and finances through the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. Thus more fuel is added to the flames of the conflict which Russia started over three years ago. Only in two days of 6 and 7 June, 24 railway cisterns (1400 tons) with fuel and lubricants were delivered to Rovenki, 10 rail wagons with ammunition (300 ton) to Ilovaisk, and 12 trucks with ammunition to Luhansk.

We welcome the recommitment reached yesterday in the TCG to so called "harvest ceasefire" and urge Russia to observe it in deeds, not words.

On 15 June, the 66th Russia's so called "humanitarian convoy" encroached into the Ukrainian territory. We strongly condemn the Russian practice of sending so-called "humanitarian convoys" in violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the principles of international humanitarian law. We insist that the humanitarian assistance be delivered based on the international mechanism as envisaged by the Minsk agreements. We strongly urge the Russian Federation to send deliveries of humanitarian nature through border check-points, controlled by the Government of Ukraine.

### **Distinguished colleagues,**

The violence in Donbas has not stopped because Kremlin continues to pursue the original objectives of its aggression taking comfort in maintaining hostilities as the means of putting pressure on Ukraine. It is crystal clear that sustainable and comprehensive ceasefire and withdrawal of weapons remain the basic necessary prerequisite for further progress in implementing the Minsk agreements in their entirety.

This goal is hardly reachable due to the on-going obstructions by the Russian side to the full, safe and unhindered freedom of movement and access of the SMM monitors in the areas under Russia's effective control. Without effective SMM monitoring and verification, it is impossible to receive the full information about Russia's military supplies, movement and intentions on the Ukrainian sovereign territory. Russia does not want transparency which would reveal the full picture on the ground. Under these circumstances it should come as no surprise that the SMM weekly report of 14 June registered 18 restrictions of the Mission's freedom of

movement in the areas outside of government control, that is 86% of encountered restrictions during the week. The last weekly report of 21 June registers 13 such restrictions – all of them, 100%, in the occupied areas.

The SMM patrols were intimidated and restricted by the Russian hybrid forces near Mineralne, Kozatske, Sidove, Staromykhailivka, Trudivske, Yasne, Smile and many other locations in non-government controlled areas. The Russia-backed militants continue to hinder the activities of the SMM attempting to conceal the movements and use of Minsk-proscribed heavy weapons, tanks and artillery, as it took place near Zaichenko, when on 7 June an SMM UAV came under fire, whereas the next day of 8 June the SMM saw two self-propelled howitzers (2S1 Gvozdika, 122mm) in this location.

We urge Russia to put an end to restrictions and deliver on its commitments, including on the safety and freedom of movement of the SMM. We cannot accept it that the Russian side in the JCCC continued blackmailing the SMM by requests to receive the security guarantees directly from the illegal armed formations based in Donetsk, which, as pointed out by the SMM, is “contrary to the responsibility of the JCCC and contrary to the well-established practice of JCCC facilitating these guarantees”.

While the Russian Federation continues to aim at diverting attention from its ongoing aggression against Ukraine, in particular by making unfounded claims and allegations as was the case at the last Permanent Council of 8 June about the so called “seizure” by the Ukrainian Armed Forces of Zholobok in Luhansk region, noteworthy is the respective report of the SMM that “no new or moved military positions near Zholobok, with the most recent forward positions observed in the same locations since December 2016 – January 2017”. It remains important to dispel Russia’s myths which aim at covering up its illegal actions.

### **Mr. Chairman,**

In the last meeting of the Permanent Council we spoke about the dire media situation and persecutions taking place in the temporarily occupied Crimea and Donbas. These assessments were also reflected in the earlier mentioned latest OHCHR report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, which stated the ongoing deterioration of freedom of expression in conflict affected areas, particularly in territory controlled by armed groups, where access to information, freedom of the media and plurality of opinion remained severely limited and journalists exposed to intimidation and threats. Special attention was given to the freedom of peaceful assembly, which had steadily deteriorated: “since the armed groups seized control, no pro-Ukrainian demonstrations or open protests against the armed groups have taken place”.

The same report contains a worrying record of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law affecting people residing in the temporarily occupied Crimea, including the diminishing space for Ukrainian as a language of instruction in education, non-respect of fair trial guarantees, retroactive application of criminal law, forced transfers of protected persons from Crimea to the Russian Federation, death in detention, torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and the

absence of access to mechanisms for effective remedy. The Russian Federation, as an occupying power, bears responsibility for these violations and we urge it to heed the calls of the international community to stop them and allow permanent international monitoring on the peninsula.

We urge Russia to halt its aggression against Ukraine, to implement in good faith its commitments under the Minsk agreements, to reverse the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula, which remains an integral part of Ukraine. We express high appreciation for the solidarity and firmness of the international community in stimulating Russia's return to the tenets of international law, including through restrictive measures, as was reaffirmed on 19 June, when the European Council extended the Crimea-related sanctions by one year until 23 June 2018, and on 20 June when the US Department of Treasury expanded the sanctions list.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**