



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

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

As delivered by Ihor Prokopchuk,  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1161<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
19 October 2017

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The delegation of Ukraine has regularly drawn attention of the OSCE participating States to the collusion between Russia’s authorities and the Russia-backed illegal armed formations in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine from the very beginning of Russia’s aggression against my country. As Russia was instigating and fuelling the conflict by its hybrid methods of warfare, it was sending into Ukraine Russian subversive groups, mercenaries and fighters and was active in setting up and arming illegal armed formations on the Ukrainian territory. Together with the Russian regular troops they formed the hybrid Russian forces in Donbas. In the PC meeting of 23 March of this year we brought to the attention of the Permanent Council the photographs capturing the meeting of Assistant to the President of the Russian Federation Vladislav Surkov with some leaders of terrorist activities in Donbas. That meeting took place at the President-Hotel (Moscow) belonging to the Department of Affairs of the President of the Russian Federation. Today we would like to draw attention of the delegations to the photographs, available publicly in the media, of Vladislav Surkov and a number of leaders of illegal armed formations unveiling last Monday a monument to Russian mercenaries in Rostov-on-Don (Russian Federation). We emphasise that it is Russia’s denial of facts and its direct role in the conflict in Donbas coupled with ongoing aggression and failure to implement the undertaken commitments which remain the key obstacles to bringing peace and normal life to the people of Donbas.

**Distinguished colleagues,**

Whereas Ukraine and the OSCE community persistently call on Russia to respect its commitments on cease-fire regime and withdrawal of heavy weapons as basic requirements of the Minsk agreements, the Russian Federation ignores these calls. The hybrid Russian forces in Donbas continue to resort to shellings from artillery and mortars. The most recent such attacks, as registered by the SMM, were

carried out from non-government-controlled Horlivka, Manuilivka and south from the Donetsk Filtration Station on 12 October, Kadiivka on 13 October. In the last 48 hours 2 Ukrainian servicemen were killed and 7 were wounded. The presence of proscribed weapons in violation of withdrawal lines in areas controlled by Russian hybrid forces is reported by the SMM on a nearly daily basis, most recently they were registered, including tanks and MLRS Grad, in reports of 12 and 13 October. On 15 October “the SMM saw six tanks (type unknown) being unloaded from tractor-trailers near “DPR”-controlled Zernove (70km south of Donetsk), in a zone within which deployment of heavy armaments and military equipment is proscribed according to Point 5 of the Memorandum of 19 September 2014. The SMM also saw together with the tanks about 18 infantry fighting vehicles (IFV) (BMP-2), assessed as new or refurbished, and 12 military-type trucks. The SMM’s freedom of movement in this area has been restricted several times in the recent months”. As repeatedly noted by the SMM, in view of the limitations what is reported represents a tip of the iceberg and registers existing trends.

Russia denies to the OSCE the conduct of permanent monitoring at the Ukrainian-Russian state border, thus breaching its commitments under the Minsk agreements. According to available information, in recent days further illicit supplies from Russia into the Ukrainian territory took place: on 29 September 18 trucks with spare parts for self-propelled artillery systems arrived to Luhansk, on 1 October 10 railway carriages with ammunition arrived to Sukhodilsk, on 3 October 7 cisterns with fuel and lubricants (420 tons) arrived to Rovenki.

Restrictions to the freedom of movement and access of the SMM in the occupied territories have not been removed or even eased which is reflected in every SMM weekly report. Every day in this past week the SMM reported significant not-mine related restrictions in the non-government-controlled areas – the reports on 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16 October. Particularly telling about deliberate nature of restrictions is the report of 16 October pointing out that the Russian hybrid fighter said that “he had been informed that the SMM was travelling towards this area and that he had been ordered to go to Ivanivka to stop the SMM”.

The continuing impediments and threats to the SMM testify to Russia’s persistent disrespect for the SMM mandate, agreed also by Russia, and for the Declaration of support for the SMM adopted by the Permanent Council in April.

We have repeatedly urged the Russian Federation to remove obstacles and restrictions affecting the delivery of international humanitarian assistance to the areas of Donbas which are under Russia’s effective control. However Russia continues to ignore the hardships of the people living under the Russian occupation. Last week’s visit to Ukraine of the Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Ursula Mueller highlighted that four millions of civilians, most predominantly in the occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, continue to face dire humanitarian situation. The SMM, in particular, points out to the plight of civilians in Pikuzy, where residents face restricted access to fuel, food and employment. It is the same Pikuzy, where, as reported by the SMM, militants “have positions in residential area”, and where the residents requested immediate withdrawal of armed men and of weapons from residential areas of the village. We hope that the persistence of the Ukrainian participants in the TCG will result in the

opening of a new crossing point in Zolote very soon to ease the movement of the people across the contact line.

The Russian Federation continues to further undermine the peaceful resolution of the conflict by increasing the number of Ukrainian citizens in its illegal detention. In the PC meeting of 31 August, the Delegation of Ukraine informed about the disappearance of 19-year old Ukrainian citizen Pavlo Gryb who was abducted and transferred by the Russian secret services from the territory of Belarus to Russia. Pavlo Gryb is still in illegal detention. Russia acts in contravention of international law and human rights by denying medical assistance to him offered by the Ukrainian medics in accordance with the decision of the ECHR of 6 October. We condemn this cruel treatment of Pavlo Gryb and call for international pressure on Russia in seeking his release. We also condemn the decision taken in Russia yesterday to extend the illegal detention of P.Gryb until 4 January 2018. Whereas now already over one hundred and fifty Ukrainian citizens are in illegal detention of the Russian side, we urge Russia to immediately stop the abduction of people and release those illegally detained.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The Russian occupation authorities continue to persecute and terrorise the population in the temporarily occupied Crimean peninsula. After last week's mass searches in Bakhchisaray in the houses of Crimean Tatars and detention of 15 of them by the Russian occupation forces, at least 49 Crimean Tatars were detained on 14 October as they staged single-person pickets with banners like: "Crimean Tatars are not terrorists. Give back fathers to their children". We strongly condemn the perpetration of fear by the Russian occupation authorities and persecution of everyone who opposes the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

We also condemn Russia's ongoing attempts to legitimize the occupation. On 12 October the Central Bank of the Russian Federation issued into circulation a new 200 rubles banknote displaying the temporarily occupied city of Sevastopol. In this connection the National Bank of Ukraine issued a directive forbidding "banks and financial institutions of Ukraine to perform any cash transactions with their clients using banknotes and coins issued by the Central Bank of the Russian Federation in case they contain images of maps, symbols, buildings, monuments, archeological or historical artefacts, and landscapes or any other objects located on the Ukrainian administrative territorial units occupied by the Russian Federation and/or bear texts related to occupation of Ukraine's territories by the Russian Federation". We call upon all OSCE participating States to effectively prevent the circulation of such Russian banknotes and coins on their territories.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The actions of the Russian Federation reaffirm that it remains in clear, gross and uncorrected violation of OSCE principles and commitments. Russia's actions beyond and within its borders represent not only non-compliance with, but hostility to

the principles and values embedded in the OSCE. The flagrant violations committed by Russia remain the source of grave threats and challenges to European security and require continuing adequate responses.

We again urge the Russian Federation to return to the tenets of international law, to stop its aggression against Ukraine, including by withdrawing its troops from Ukrainian territory, and to reverse the illegal occupation of Crimea.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**