



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 Ihor Lossovskyy,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1242nd meeting of the Permanent Council,

Mr. Chairperson,

Ukraine has yet again demonstrated its commitment to peaceful resolution in Donbas and readiness to difficult compromises to this end. Following ceasefire initiative, disengagement of forces and voluntary mutual release of detainees, Ukraine has taken a new significant effort towards peaceful resolution in Donbas.

By agreeing on the text based on the so-called "Steinmeier formula", Ukraine has completed its part of job in the run-up to the "Normandy Four" Summit.

Now it is time for the other party – Russia – to contribute and withdraw from Donbas. We look forward to concrete decisions at the forthcoming N4 Summit towards peaceful resolution and restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty in Donbas, as well as to implementation of those decisions by Russia fully and in good faith.

The mutual release of 35 detained persons by the parties to the conflict – the Russian Federation and Ukraine – on 7 September 2019 became an important step. There is a need to consolidate further efforts and ensure the release of all hostages and illegally detained persons on the basis of "all for all" principle, as prescribed by the Minsk agreements.

Dozens and hundreds of Ukrainians continue to be illegally held in Russian captivity, including in the occupied territories of Crimea and parts of Donbas. We urge the Russian side to expedite the related negotiations within the TCG. We also urge the Russian Federation to implement the order by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea of 25 May 2019 by immediately releasing the Ukrainian naval vessels Berdyansk, Nikopol and Yani Kapu, and returning them to the custody of Ukraine. Respect for the international law and OSCE principles remains a basis for resolution of the conflict, initiated and fuelled by Russia. We thank the EU member states for their continued political, financial and operational support to Ukraine in our fight against the ongoing Russian aggression.

This conflict will continue until the Russian Federation ceases its occupation of parts of Ukraine and withdraws its armed forces from Crimea, armed formations as well as militants and hardware from Donbas, and Ukraine's territorial integrity is restored within its internationally recognized borders.

On 8 September, the so-called “local elections” to illegal institutions established by the Russian occupation administration in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol took place. It was another flagrant breach of Ukraine’s sovereignty, with results of this illegal voting being null and void, and having no legal consequences. Ukrainian Parliament adopted its statement on this issue, in which it called upon the democratic states across the globe to maintain and strengthen international political and economic pressure on the Russian Federation. We thank all international partners including OSCE participating States, which condemned these illegal actions by Russia.

Despite the ongoing restrictions on the Mission’s activities in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas, the SMM continues registering intensive cargo traffic by trains, trucks and smaller vehicles in the border areas near Voznesenivka, Uspenka and Marynivka. These reports confirm Russia’s illegal supplies and trade through the uncontrolled segment of the border, which are used to fuel violence along the contact line and to support the Russian occupation administration. In violation of the Minsk agreements, the Russian armed formations keep dozens of heavy weapons in violation of their respective withdrawal lines, as confirmed by the SMM weekly reports. These facts indicate Russia’s ongoing unwillingness to start implementing its own commitments under the Minsk agreements. Violence in Donbas continues, with the growing number of ceasefire violations.

We thank the SMM for its efforts to monitor and support respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas by establishing and reporting facts on alleged violations of fundamental OSCE principles and commitments. We took note of the findings by the Mission on the situation with freedom of religion or belief gathered by the SMM during its visits to more than one hundred religious organizations and communities in those parts of Donbas, which were included into the weekly report of 11 September 2019. These findings refer to numerous prohibitive control measures, denials of registration, bans, confiscation of places of worship and other means of pressure applied by the Russian occupation administration in Donbas. We strongly condemn these illegal actions by the Russian side and urge it to stop violating the OSCE commitments.

We express our protest against the yesterday’s decision of the military court in Rostov of 2 October 2019 to sentence Crimean Tatar activist and citizen journalist Nariman Memedeminov to 2 years and 6 months of colony under fabricated charges of terrorism. We understand perfectly well, why the Russian side continues denying access of the SMM to the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. If allowed, the SMM would document breaches of fundamental freedoms and human rights in Crimea. The recent report of the United Nations Secretary General on this issue is probably most illustrative in this regard. Its comprehensive findings are based on the well-proven methodology of the distance monitoring, which in our view should be implemented by the SMM as well. We join the call by the UN SG to the Russian government to uphold its obligations under international human rights law in Crimea and to respect obligations that apply to it pursuant to international humanitarian law. The Russian occupation administration must in particular lift restrictions imposed on the Crimean Tatar community including the ban on the Mejlis, to ensure the availability of education in the Ukrainian

language, to end the conscription of residents of Crimea into the armed forces of the Russian Federation, to restore the property rights of all former owners, to end the transfers of protected persons and to ensure that all of them previously transferred to the Russian Federation are allowed to return to Ukraine's Crimea. Finally, the safe and unfettered access to Crimea by established regional and international human rights monitoring mechanisms must be ensured to verify implementation of Russia's obligations as an occupying Power.

In conclusion, 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.