



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 1135th meeting of the Permanent Council,
2 March 2017

Mr. Chairman,

Since the last Permanent Council meeting the security situation in conflict-affected areas of Donbas remained tense and volatile as the hybrid Russian forces continued to provoke hostilities. Two years after the Minsk Package of Measures was to put an end to military assaults of Russia in Donbas, none of the respective provisions have been fulfilled by the Russia and its proxies, including the very first step of comprehensible and sustainable ceasefire.

Over the past week, the Ukrainian positions and residential areas were targeted in 540 attacks, including with the use of mortars and heavy artillery. The hybrid Russian forces continue to use MLRS BM-21 Grad, as confirmed, for instance, by the SMM report of 27 February on the outgoing explosions from non-government controlled Horlivka. The last 8 days attacks again significantly increased the toll of casualties: 7 Ukrainian soldiers were killed and 39 were wounded.

On 24 February, Avdiivka and the Donetsk filtration station in Yasynuvata have once again been shelled by the Russian terrorist forces from proscribed heavy weapons, which caused disruption of supply of electricity to Avdiivka and of water to the whole region, including Donetsk city.

The electricity supply to Avdiivka was restored by the Ukrainian repair teams as soon as the relevant security guarantees had been provided by the Russian side on 27 February, while the situation at the Donetsk filtration station remains yet unresolved. We fully share the concerns expressed in this regard by Ambassador Apakan. The Ukrainian side took exhaustive measures to extend security guarantees for the workers of the company “Water of Donbas” to carry out the necessary repair works. The Ukrainian side stands ready to accomplish demining works from explosives in the area of this critical infrastructure facility. However, these works could not be carried out in the last six days because of the denial of security guarantees by the hybrid Russian forces. The Russian side of the JCCC has been unable to effectively resolve this critical issue which prevents restoration of water supply and leads to further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Avdiivka, Yasynuvata and Donetsk. Yesterday the shellings in that area continued.

Security and the ceasefire regime were central topics during the Normandy format Ministerial meeting on 18 February 2017 on the margins of the Munich Security Conference. However, two days later the Russian side disrupted the planned and agreed TCG video-conference. This video-conference was held only on 25 February.

Unfortunately, the developments on the ground do not indicate that Moscow and its proxies in Donbas take seriously the commitments they assume. We continue to witness total disregard of the hybrid Russian forces to fulfillment of the security provisions of the Minsk agreements.

Distinguished colleagues,

A month ago, when the critical civilian infrastructure was damaged in Avdiivka as a result of the large-scale military assault by the hybrid Russian forces, the SMM played a significant role in facilitating access of the repair teams to resume supply of the utilities to the population. The freedom of movement and access of the monitors remains of crucial importance for monitoring and verification as well as for facilitation of repair works.

However, what we witness from the SMM reports are the increased restrictions and pressure on the monitors by the hybrid Russian forces. The SMM weekly report of 22 February referred to 27 cases, when the Mission encountered restrictions of its freedom of movement in non-government-controlled areas. Moreover, as stated in the same report, monitoring of these areas was hindered by continued refusal to provide security guarantees enabling the SMM to open additional forward patrol bases and patrol hubs in the area.

A matter of particular concern is the increased number of cases of intimidation of the SMM monitors by fighters of the hybrid Russian forces. Those were not “isolated cases” as the Russian side was insisting in the past weeks, but constitute a deliberate policy of restricting the SMM freedom of movement to prevent the monitors from fulfilling their mandate and reporting fully and objectively on the situation on the ground. Russia has not taken any measures to reign in its fighters and thus they continue to intimidate monitors.

The spot report of 27 February informed about two cases targeting the SMM monitors in the centre of non-government-controlled Pikuzy and the gun shots and seizure of the SMM mini-UAV by fighters of the illegal armed formations in Yasynuvata. The seizure of the UAV prevented the SMM from monitoring the consequences of the shelling of the Donetsk water filtration station, which was targeted and damaged by the hybrid Russian forces on 24 February. We strongly condemn these serious incidents of intimidation and urge Russia to take the necessary measures to put an end to them. While noting that the UAV was returned to the SMM few days later, it is not acceptable that the vehicle was returned without the information collected by it which is the property of the OSCE.

We point out with deep concern that the Ukrainian officers from the JCCC were again targeted by the hybrid Russian forces. This time it happened near Popasna on 27 February, despite the respective car marking and identification of the officers.

Mr. Chairman,

As was stated upon the completion of the Normandy Ministerial meeting on 18 February, without ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons there is no possibility for progress on the political track of the Minsk agreements.

Yet, on the very same day the prospects for the political track of peaceful resolution were further jeopardized by Russia and its decision on recognition of so called “documents” and “vehicle registration plates” issued by illegal structures in Donbas. As we all know from the reports of the OSCE missions, from at least middle of last year the Russian authorities allowed holders of so called “passports” and “registration plates” to cross in both directions of the uncontrolled sections of the Ukrainian-Russian state border, but now the Kremlin decided to formalize it.

Ukraine condemned the Kremlin’s decision and does not recognise it. This decision violates Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and fundamentally breaches the Minsk agreements by de-facto recognising the Russia-controlled illegal structures in the occupied Ukrainian territories of Donbas. We welcome a clear reaction by the Austrian Chairmanship and other OSCE community, including by Germany and France as mediators in the Normandy format, to this yet another serious departure of Russia from its Minsk commitments and the OSCE principles. Unfortunately, Moscow continues to pursue the course it embarked upon in 2014, including when it endorsed the illegal so-called “elections” in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions on 2 November 2014 in full contradiction to the Minsk Protocol signed on 5 September 2014.

Distinguished colleagues,

While the Russian military integrated the illegal armed formations in their command and control structure, providing for uninterrupted flow of manpower, weapons and ammunition, the fake structures established by Russia in Donbas are maintained afloat by Russian finances.

On 25 February the Security Service of Ukraine disclosed the funding channels, through which the Government of the Russian Federation supports its proxies in the Luhansk region. The total budget of those areas in the first quarter of 2017 was determined at 11 billion Russian rubles of which 9 billion are channeled from Russia via a specifically established and designated fund.

The ongoing Russia’s aggression against Ukraine continues to entail enormous human, economic and financial losses and costs. This unacceptable situation, two and a half years after signing of the first Minsk documents, can only be changed by making Russia to fully implement the undertaken commitments, including the withdrawal of its forces and weaponry from the Ukrainian territory. Based on Russia’s actions until now, the prospects of de-escalation will remain elusive until reinstatement of full control at the Ukrainian-Russian state border in the occupied areas of Donbas. The establishment of permanent monitoring and verification by the OSCE at the border remains a pending and critically important measure envisaged by the Minsk agreements.

It is necessary to maintain and step up the political, diplomatic and economic pressure on Russia to make it implement the undertaken commitments under the Minsk agreements and to refrain from further violations of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We urge Russia to return to the tenets of international law, to fulfill its international commitments and obligations, to reverse the illegal occupation of the Crimean peninsula which is an integral part of the sovereign territory of Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.