



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 1096th meeting of the Permanent Council,
14 April 2016

Mr. Chairman,

Unfortunately, the past week brought no optimism from Donbas as the situation there continues to spiral in the menacing direction. The combined Russian-separatist forces further undermine international efforts of de-escalation and the Minsk agreements. In its attempts to destabilize Ukraine, Moscow opts for high level of violence on the ground despite its peaceful declarations within the Normandy Four, the Trilateral Contact Group and in our debates in the Permanent Council. We encourage Russia to consider the detrimental effect of such actions for the credibility of the respective international frameworks.

We share the concerns, expressed by the German Chairmanship and members of the OSCE Troika in their joint statement of 12 April, over sharp increase of ceasefire violations and the presence of heavy weapons in the conflict area. We also fully support the emphasis placed earlier by the Chairmanship on the urgent need of a sustainable ceasefire and its critical importance for the progress on all other aspects of the Minsk Agreements, in particular on the political track.

Just as before, the full implementation of the initial security provisions of the Minsk Package of measures remains a basic requirement for progress. This has not been achieved due to persistent unwillingness of Russia and its proxies to honour the undertaken commitments, starting from an all-out offensive on Debaltseve hours after signing the Minsk package. This attitude has not changed.

The highest number of artillery and mortar explosions was recorded now by the OSCE SMM in a single week, as follows from the weekly report of 6 April. Donetsk direction was again the most violent as the majority of armed provocations by the combined Russian-separatist forces occurred there.

Avdiyivka remains the main hotspot, where the militants persist in their offensive attempts. Most of the attacks are carried out with the use of heavy weapons, including high caliber artillery and mortars. The situation along other sections of the contact line also remains fragile. Over the past week the provocations by the illegal armed groups

were registered in the outskirts of Horlivka, Zaytseve, Mayorsk, Svitlodarsk, Maryinka, Shyrokyne, Pavlopil, Novotroitske, Schastya, Tryokhizbenka and Stanytsya Luhanska. The SMM registers all types of heavy weapons in the occupied territories within the exclusion zone, including MRLS “Grad”.

Rapid aggravation increases the toll of casualties. Between 7 and 12 April Ukraine lost 2 servicemen and 35 were wounded. It is of particular concern that the civilian population remains under attack. On 11 April a local resident in Maryinka was killed by a militants’ sniper. Civilians were killed by militants’ shellings in Avdiyivka.

Distinguished colleagues,

We strongly condemn that the combined Russian-separatist forces deliberately put to risk the OSCE monitors. The firing incident in Snizhne, deep inside the occupied territory, testifies to its deliberate nature. We consider all cases that the SMM reported in its spot reports of 7 and 9 April as attempts to intimidate the monitors and force them to limit their monitoring and verification activities in the occupied part of Donbas. We urge the Russian Federation to halt this unacceptable practice and to ensure such incidents are not repeated. For its part, Ukraine will continue to take all necessary measures for safety and security of monitors.

We deplore that despite our regular calls Russia has not delivered on ensuring the SMM freedom of movement across the occupied areas of Donbas. The combined Russian-separatist forces, operating under the guise of the so-called “DPR” and “LPR”, continue to restrict the SMM monitoring “through denying access to certain areas or imposing conditions on the SMM”. It is a disturbing trend that the number of restrictions is on the rise. Only on 8 April the SMM reported 8 cases of denied access in the occupied territories. The general number of cases of restriction, imposed in the occupied areas between 7 and 12 April, totaled 34 or 94% of all freedom-of-movement incidents in this period.

Notably, the increase in number of freedom-of-movement incidents in the occupied territories coincides with the intensification of ceasefire violations by the militants. We consider impediments to the SMM activities as attempts to conceal the military build-up in the occupied areas of Donbas, which continues. Significant restrictions for the SMM at the Ukrainian-Russian border and in adjacent areas further accentuate these considerations.

Regular outbursts of violence and security deterioration prove that uncontrolled border in the occupied areas of Donbas generates insecurity and escalation. The flow of supplies to the illegal armed formations from the Russian Federation has never ceased. Russian military UAV “Orlan-10”, which was downed on 8 April over Avdiyivka, further enlarged the already extensive list of evidence of Russia’s military engagement in Donbas. It should be pointed out that the Russian jamming system R330 Zhytel, spotted by the SMM in the occupied areas of Donbas in 2015, was recently observed in the vicinity of Makiyivka. Other types of advanced Russian military equipment have

also been registered.

Again in the past week five echelons with military hardware, including tanks, ammunition and fuel arrived to the train stations of Khartsyzsk, Illovaysk, Krasnodon and Debeltseve. This situation highlights an urgent need of a special focus in the SMM monitoring activities on the transport routes and hubs.

Ensuring full and unhindered OSCE border monitoring and resuming border control by the Ukrainian authorities remains indispensable. Establishing a security zone in border areas of both Russia and Ukraine, as agreed in Minsk, must be seen as a very important step to transform the Ukrainian-Russian border from an impediment into opportunity in the efforts towards peaceful resolution. As implementation of this agreed provision is long overdue, we encourage to intensify practical steps of the OSCE in this regard.

Mr.Chairman,

As noted in our previous meetings and yesterday in the SMM briefing, the humanitarian situation in the conflict affected areas of Donbas continues to aggravate. Due to regular shellings it remains impossible to resume the work of the crossing point in Stanytsya Luhanska. The crossing point “Zolote” does not function as the Russia-backed militants refuse to open their checkpoint for civilians.

The agreement of the Normandy Ministerial in March that the present restrictions on operation of the international humanitarian organizations in the occupied part of Donbas must be lifted and the ICRC must have access to hostages and illegally detained persons has not materialized in practice.

Immediate steps must be taken to release all hostages and illegally detained persons as a high humanitarian priority.

Distinguished colleagues,

We thank the delegations of the OSCE states for broad participation in last Thursday’s briefing “Stop Impunity for Human Rights Violations in Crimea”. The event, where we could all benefit from reports by experts of the civil society, the OSCE and the UN, has shown that the grave human rights violations and repressions by the Russian occupying authorities in Crimea must remain a matter of primary concern and zero-tolerance for the OSCE community. The most glaring violations of human rights take place in the situation of occupation.

We strongly condemn that yesterday the Russian occupying authorities decided to suspend the activities of the Mejlis – a representative body of the Crimean Tatar people. The President of Ukraine called this step a restoration of the Stalin’s policy, prompted by authoritarian fear of self-organization of free people. We call on the OSCE HCNM to use its mandate to the full to address this unacceptable situation, endangering the rights of the indigenous people of Crimea.

The Russian Federation as an occupying power bears full responsibility for halting repressions against the representatives of the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar communities. We reiterate our call on Moscow to allow free and unconditional access of the international monitors to the occupied peninsula to enable permanent monitoring of the human rights situation.

Mr.Chairman,

As long as Russia maintains its aggression and “hybrid war” against Ukraine, continues its attacks on the core principles of the European peace and order it remains essential that the international community maintains its political and economic sanctions to defend against aggression and stimulate Russia’s return to the tenets of international law.

We reiterate our persistent call on the Russian Federation to immediately take practical steps to implement its commitments under the Minsk Agreements and to exert its influence on its proxies 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.