



**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 Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1290<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council  
19 November 2020

### **Mr. Chairperson,**

At the previous meeting of the Permanent Council, a lot of attention was paid to the opening of Zolote and Shchastia entry-exit checkpoints at the line of contact in Donbas. Russia's attempts, made at that meeting, to avoid responsibility for non-fulfilment of its part of commitments, has deceived no one. The next day, Germany and France, as mediators in the Normandie format, issued a joint statement in this regard, recognizing Ukraine's compliance with its commitments, and calling on Russia to enable the opening of those two EECPs as it had been agreed earlier. Russia's further reaction to the joint statement on 17 November was another failed attempt to justify its aggressive stance towards Ukraine with the use of emotions, ungrounded critics and manipulations. The MFA of Ukraine refuted these insinuations by the Russian side in its statement on the same day.

Coming back to the discussions held in the Permanent Council, let me stress that we do not accept Russia's accusations on, I quote, "hasty opening of all Ukrainian EECPs at the line of contact on 10 November", end of quote, delivered last week. I would remind the Russian delegation that yet on 22 July, the participants of the TCG Working Group on Humanitarian Issues "reconfirmed their readiness for the simultaneous opening of two additional entry-exit crossing points in Zolote and Shchastia of the Luhansk region, no later than 10 November 2020". I was quoting again, this time – Special Representative Heidi Grau from her press-release following the TCG meeting. We reiterate our call to the Russian side to immediately open its part of the EECPs in order to ease the suffering of civilians, without any preconditions and far-fetched pretexts.

The issue of the EECPs, among others, was discussed at the working meeting of political advisers to the leaders of the Normandie Four, held on 13 November in a format of video conference. We join the call made at that meeting to ensure unhindered access of the ICRC representatives to the places of detention in the temporarily occupied territories of Donbas in order to speed up the process of verifying the lists for mutual release of detainees. This is another arrangement reached by the N4 leaders in Paris in December last year, which until now has not been implemented by Russia.

The Ukrainian side will continue to exert all efforts to ensure the free and safe passage of civilians across the line of contact. As stressed by President Zelenskyy on 14 November, I quote, “establishment of new and modern EECs and restoration of roads and infrastructure in Donbas is a clear proof of Ukraine’s openness to all its citizens, including those living in the temporarily occupied territories”, end of quote. Despite what you hear from the Russian delegation in this hall, Ukraine remains committed to the peaceful reintegration of its territories, seized by Russia in 2014.

Such peaceful reintegration would be impossible until the Russian troops, mercenaries and weapons are withdrawn from the territory of Ukraine. While we are listening to Russia’s groundless accusations on Ukraine’s preparations for the so-called “scenario of violence” in Donbas, Russia itself continues to supply its illegal armed formations.

Last week, we asked the Russian delegation to explain how the most modern Russian electronic warfare system was brought to an airfield near Luhansk city, where it was spotted by the SMM on 8 November. No response followed. Three days later, on 11 November, the SMM observed in a training area near Shymshynivka a mine clearing vehicle (UR-07 Peresortirovka), another example of Russia-produced modern system, which has never been in the use of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. I would again urge the Russian delegate to give a simple answer to a simple question: how do these military systems arrive to the parts of Ukraine, currently fully controlled by Russia?

In the course of the previous week, from 9 to 15 November, the Russian armed formations violated ceasefire for 21 times: from 82mm mortars, grenade launchers, heavy machine guns, small arms, and sniper rifles. On 13 November, they used an UAV to drop VOG-17 grenade over the positions of the Joint Forces near Shumy settlement.

The SMM reports continue to confirm further violations of the security arrangements by the Russian side.

On 9 November, I quote, “inside the disengagement area near Petrivske, an SMM mini-UAV spotted four people in camouflage clothing, assessed as members of the armed formations, in a former position of the armed formations near the area’s south-eastern corner”, end of quote. On the same day, inside the same area, the SMM also spotted more than 70 anti-tank mines, all of them were assessed as belonging to the Russian armed formations.

The SMM weekly report of 17 November informs on 58 weapons in violation of withdrawal lines, all but one in Russia-occupied areas, and 91 weapons outside designated storage sites, all of them, again, in Russia-occupied areas.

I would remind that the disengagement areas had to be set free from the members of the Russian armed formations and mines during the disengagement. Heavy weapons had to be withdrawn yet in 2014. Still, we continue to witness these violations until now.

It should come as no surprise that the withdrawal of the Russian illegal armed formations and mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine became the first paragraph of the action plan, submitted by the delegation of Ukraine to the TCG for consideration of its other participants. Russia’s expectations that it will continue supplying its most modern weapon systems to Donbas, and Ukraine will turn a blind eye to them and organize local elections at Russia’s gunpoint, are groundless. This contradicts both to the Minsk agreements and the common sense.

My final point today on Donbas will be paragraph 9 of the Minsk Package of Measures, which the Russian delegations refers to so often. It starts with the words, I quote, "Reinstatement of full control of the state border by the government of Ukraine throughout the conflict area, starting on day 1 after the local elections". I repeat, full control. Let me remind in this regard that the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border constitutes 409km. The transfer of control of it is simply impossible overnight. Preparations must start well in advance, with clear understanding of necessary practical steps. In this context, we reiterate the need to create an additional Working Group on Border within the TCG.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

As we approach the OSCE Ministerial Council in Tirana, we need to elaborate on the most critical issues present on the OSCE agenda, which are to be highlighted during the MC. The Crimean peninsula, a part of Ukraine, illegally occupied by the Russian Federation for almost 7 years, is undoubtedly one of such issues.

On 16 November, the media freedom in the temporarily occupied parts of Ukraine was discussed, among others, at the ministerial-level meeting of the Media Freedom Coalition member states. The MFA of Ukraine informed that due to the Russian occupation authorities' repressions and threats, independent journalists were forced to leave those territories, and ordinary citizens began to perform functions of independent media in Crimea. Currently, nine of them are behind bars. They must be immediately released.

The same day, the issue of the ongoing large-scale violations of religious freedom in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine was raised by the MFA of Ukraine at the third Ministerial-level Meeting to Promote Freedom of Religion or Belief. Specific facts were provided on persecution and harassment of religious communities, which became the norm in the Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine.

Observance of the fundamental freedoms is one of the core activities of the OSCE. We call on participating States to keep this topic high on the OSCE agenda, especially when dealing with the situations of occupation, in which the legitimate authorities are denied access to their citizens, who are left without legal instruments of protection and persecuted by the occupation administrations.

We, again, urge the Russian Federation to reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea, militarization of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, and to stop its aggression against Ukraine, including by withdrawing its armed formations, mercenaries and their hardware from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and fully implementing its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**