



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 1288th meeting of the Permanent Council
5 November 2020

Mr. Chairperson,

Last week's discussions at the Permanent Council confirmed the fact that the Russian side had been using the Resolution of the Ukrainian Parliament on local elections only as a pretext to block constructive talks within the TCG. When elections ended, with the Resolution in effect implemented, the Russian delegation returned to its long-established practice of accusations and obstruction. This demonstrates Russia's unchanged policy to prevent any substantial progress in resolution of the conflict until Ukraine fulfils Kremlin's demands to legalize the Russian occupation administrations in the occupied parts of Donbas and reconciles with Russia's refusal to implement the commitment to withdraw its troops from Donbas.

We urge the Russian side to stop this practice, and to unblock the constructive work in the TCG as well as finalization and implementation of the outstanding decisions, in particular on the release of detainees, disengagement and demining, which should be carried out before the start of winter season.

We also remind the Russian side of its commitment, undertaken in Paris last December, to ensure full and unconditional access of the ICRC to all detained persons. Until now, this provision of the Normandie Four Common Agreed Conclusions has not been implemented in the occupied parts of Donbas. The ICRC must have such access. This was in particular stressed by President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy during his meeting with the ICRC President on 3 November in Kyiv.

The Russian side continues military provocations along the line of contact even during the ceasefire. On 29 and 30 October, attacks by the Russian armed formations left two Ukrainian servicemen killed and two more wounded. This represented a sharp escalation of the situation following several weeks of relative calm.

The Ukrainian side, with the help of the relevant coordination mechanisms, managed to stop the shelling and initiated an urgent meeting

of the TCG Working group on security issues. As a result of this meeting, which was held on the same day, 30 October, the sides agreed to adhere to the ceasefire and discussed the ways to prevent such incidents in the future. Following it, the relative calm along the contact line was restored.

Regrettably, it lasted only three days: on 3 November, the Russian armed formations attacked Ukrainian military positions six times in five different locations. One serviceman was wounded by fire from grenade launcher near Novoluhanske.

These developments prove that the security situation in Donbas remains fragile. At any time, it can sharply deteriorate whenever the Russian side takes such decision.

The number of Minsk-proscribed weapons remains considerably high in the occupied parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. In the last two weeks, the SMM reported on 137 such weapons, all of them but four in those areas of Donbas.

Russia's illegal supplies across the uncontrolled segment of the border continue without stopping. The OSCE Border Observer Mission reported on yet another so-called "humanitarian convoy", which arrived at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point on 29 October. The SMM patrols were again told to leave the area immediately after reaching the railway station and a border crossing point near Voznesenivka, and a border crossing point in Dovzhanske.

We thank the SMM for its efforts to monitor the areas adjacent to the border even with a very limited number of monitors at its disposal in the current situation with the spread of COVID-19.

We also remind the Russian side that the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need in Donbas, according to the Minsk Package of Measures, signed in particular by the Russian Federation, must be undertaken on the basis of an international mechanism. Otherwise, it remains a flagrant violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the applicable norms of international law. On 29 October, the MFA of Ukraine expressed its resolute protest in this regard to the MFA of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Chairperson,

Ukraine, along with other participating States, remains seriously concerned about the situation in Crimea, temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation. We continue to raise this issue in the international fora within their respective mandates.

On 29 October, the 11th Information Meeting on monitoring the situation in the occupied Crimea and the city of Sevastopol within UNESCO's mandate took place. Concrete facts were provided on the ongoing violations of human rights by the occupying authorities, oppression of various ethnic groups, repressive policy against media freedom and the safety of journalists, suppression of education in the native languages of ethnic groups living in the Peninsula, the actual blocking of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church activity and other violations of international law and the Geneva Conventions in particular.

Those are not empty words. According to Metropolitan Klyment of the Crimean Diocese of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, in Crimea the number of religious communities of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine has decreased from 49 in 2014 to only six nowadays. Three of them are under a direct threat of being dissolved.

On 3 November, another three Crimean Tatars and Ukrainian citizens, Rustem Emiruseinov, Arsen Abkhairov and Eskender Abdulganiev, were illegally sentenced to 17, 13 and 12 years, respectively. As was the case many times before, Russia used its anti-terror legislation to suppress dissenting voices, who do not agree to occupation of Crimea.

All these violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Crimea fall within the competence of the OSCE as well. We call on participating States and the OSCE executive structures to pay due attention to this serious challenge in their activities.

In the context of Crimea, I also wish to express gratitude to the SMM, which continues to monitor the respective areas in the Kherson region, checkpoints at the administrative boundary line with Russia-occupied Crimea and along the coast of the Sea of Azov. This is an important part of the SMM mandate, especially in the conditions, in which the occupying Power denies the Mission's physical access to the Crimean peninsula.

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.