



**Permanent Mission of Ukraine**  
to the International  
Organizations in Vienna

## **Statement on Seven years of illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation**

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1304<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council  
4 March 2021

**Madam Chairperson,**

These days, we mark seven years since the Russian Federation launched its armed aggression against Ukraine, flagrantly violating the norms of international law, the UN Charter and the OSCE core principles.

The developments of those days are well known. On 20 February 2014, the Russian militaries began invading the Crimean peninsula, later rewarded by the medal “For the return of Crimea” clearly indicating that day as a beginning of the military campaign. A week later, in the early morning of 27 February, the Russian Special Operations Forces seized the building of the Crimean Parliament, taking under full control the activities of the Ukrainian legitimate bodies of power. Next year, this seizure was marked by President Putin who set 27 February as the Special Operations Forces Day in Russia.

The fact of establishing effective control over Crimea by the Russian Federation since 27 February 2014 was recognized by the recent decision of the European Court of Human Rights, on which we have already informed participating States at the PC meeting on 21 January. All subsequent events in the peninsula, including a staged show called by the occupiers as so-called “referendum”, were held at the Russian gunpoint, having no legal implications.

This was in particular stressed by the UN General Assembly in its Resolution 68/262 adopted on 27 March 2014, which called upon all States, international organizations and specialized agencies not to recognize any alteration of the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, reaffirming the principle that the territory of a State shall not be the object of acquisition by another State resulting from the threat or use of force.

No matter how often the Russian side repeats its mantra on the so-called “new political-legal reality”, it will not alter the legal status of Crimea as a part of Ukraine’s territory, recognized by the international community. Crimea is Ukraine. Sooner or later, the Russian occupant troops will be withdrawn, and the respect for international law and Ukraine’s sovereignty will be restored.

The sooner it happens, the better. Crimea of 2021 differs a lot from Crimea of 2013. Week by week, we share information on the current developments in the temporarily occupied peninsula, calling Russia to stop its militarization, massive violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to ensure the access of international monitoring mechanisms. Today, I wish to provide you with a

holistic picture of what has happened in Crimea since the beginning of its illegal occupation by Russia. Here are some facts and numbers:

- 50 thousand Ukrainian citizens fled Crimea, while half a million Russian citizens illegally moved into it. This has drastically changed the demographic map of the Crimean peninsula, which had 2 million population before the occupation;

- 20 thousand Russian militaries, hundreds of tanks, multiple-launch rocket systems and artillery systems, helicopters and airplanes of different types were deployed to Crimea, and military infrastructure for the deployment of nuclear weapons was prepared. Detailed data were provided by our delegation to the FSC meeting last week;

- 28 thousand Crimean residents were forcefully conscripted into the Russian army, with criminal persecution for those who refused, while children are indoctrinated into militaristic education programs, in a clear violation of the international humanitarian law;

- 44 Ukrainian citizens disappeared, and more than one hundred political prisoners remain illegally detained under politically motivated charges, most of them Crimean Tatars, persecuted by the occupiers for expressing discontent with occupation and exercising fundamental freedoms;

- the number of children receiving education in Ukrainian decreased by 54 times, to 0.2%, while for Crimean Tatar language it is 3.1% and there is no school with Crimean Tatar language of instruction; only 8% of Crimean media survived Russian so-called "re-registration"; only 7 out of 48 religious communities continue to operate;

- the natural and cultural heritage of the peninsula is being destroyed. For instance, the conservation status of 40 objects of the natural reserve fund was illegally downgraded.

These destructive policies by the occupation regime must be stopped. We urge the Russian side to hear the clear and loud voice of the international community, expressed in numerous documents regularly adopted by international bodies, and to stop violating the international law.

We continue to count upon the principled position of participating States on non-recognition of Russia's claims on Crimea, including through restrictive measures, keeping Crimea high on the agenda of your bilateral relations with Russia and supporting diplomatic instruments to resolve the conflict.

In this vein, let me again draw your attention to the Ukrainian initiative "Crimea Platform", a consultation and coordination mechanism aimed at consolidating the efficiency of international efforts with regard to the temporary occupation of Crimea. Its Inaugural Summit is planned to take place on 23 August this year, on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ukraine's Independence. The respective invitations are now being sent to your capitals.

Concluding my statement, I wish to thank all participating States, which expressed their national positions on the anniversary of the beginning of Russia's occupation of Crimea.

We continue to strongly condemn Russia's aggression, illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, numerous violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the occupied territories of Ukraine, as well as the ongoing militarization by Russia of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. We urge Russia to reverse the illegal occupation and return to the tenets of international law.

**Thank you, Madam Chairperson.**