



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

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Statement in response to Ambassador Martin Sajdik, Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, and Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1193rd meeting of the Permanent Council,
19 July 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of Ukraine joins other delegations in warmly welcoming the CiO's Special Representative Ambassador Martin Sajdik and the SMM Chief Monitor Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan back to the Permanent Council. We thank them for their comprehensive reports on the recent developments related to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Ambassador Sajdik,

We continue to support the activities of the Trilateral Contact Group aimed at resolving security, economic and humanitarian challenges brought by the Russian aggression against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. Thanks to the efforts of the Italian Chairmanship, in the last three months the OSCE participating States had the opportunity to learn more about those challenges in the meetings with the Coordinators of the respective TCG Working Groups. It remains obvious that establishment of a proper security environment through implementation of the Minsk agreements security provisions is a necessary prerequisite for progress in other dimensions of conflict resolution. Complete withdrawal of Russian weapons and manpower from the occupied territories of Donbas must be accompanied by reinstatement of control of the state border between Ukraine and Russia throughout the conflict area. We insist on the urgent need of establishment of the Working Group on border issues within the TCG. We would appreciate an update of Ambassador Sajdik on where this issue stands now.

The ongoing conflict, which Kremlin does not wish to end, continues to pose serious socio-economic and environmental risks for the population forced to live under Russia's occupation. In the heavily industrialized areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, we face "the risk for environmental pollution resulting from major operational disruptions and incidents occurring at industrial and other

large-scale facilities”, as emphasized in the report by Ambassador Apakan. The report refers, in particular, to more than 35 mines flooded entirely or in the process of being flooded. The issue of utmost concern remains the Yunkom mine in Bunhe, where the Russian armed formations deny access of the SMM and, consequently, the update on the intentions of the Russian occupants to shut off the pumps. Keeping in mind the unpredictable consequences of potential radioactive contamination of drinking water, we expect the TCG Working Group on Economic Issues to expeditiously address this challenge. Equal attention needs to be given to the numerous objects of civilian critical infrastructure located along the contact line in Donbas, which are systematically targeted by the Russian armed formations. The necessary safety zones around such installations must be established in strict compliance with the Minsk agreements including the respective line of contact as provided for by the Memorandum of 19 September 2014. We urge the Russian Federation to ensure necessary security guarantees for repair works.

The humanitarian challenges, dealt with by the TCG Working Group on Humanitarian Issues, remain dire. “There is no meaningful progress on release of conflict-related hostages and political prisoners, including those behind bars in Russia, on search for missing people, on opening of the Zolote crossing point and renewal of access of international humanitarian organizations to the Russia-occupied areas of Donbas.” It was Ukraine’s assessment three months ago when Ambassador Sajdik and Ambassador Apakan presented last time their reports to the Permanent Council. Regrettably, this assessment remains just as valid today. Russia’s political will is necessary in each specific case to unblock the progress, however it is missing.

Ambassador Apakan,

We welcome the fact that discussions within the TCG’s Working Group on Security Issues continue to be focused “on achieving a comprehensive, sustainable, and irreversible cessation of fire”, as underlined in your report. It is deeply regrettable that the most recent so called “harvest” ceasefire in Donbas started to fail immediately after entering into effect when the Russian armed formations launched new attacks on Ukrainian military positions and civilian residential areas. Those attacks continue on the daily basis. The fifth year of conflict makes it clear that a comprehensive and sustainable cessation of fire would be impossible until the Russian Federation ends supply of manpower, heavy weapons, ammunition and finances that fuel the violence in Donbas. Putting it differently, until Russia ends its aggression against Ukraine and embarks in earnest on the path of peaceful resolution and implementation of Russia’s commitments.

For now, the SMM continues to register Russia’s military presence in the occupied territories of Donbas, including recently spotted modern sophisticated Russian weapons and military equipment: TORN radio intelligence system and Kornet anti-tank guided missile. The efficiency of the monitoring efforts is heavily undermined by Russia’s persistent policy of “blinding” the SMM patrols and technical assets. As cited in the report, the Russian armed formations “declared and placed in holding areas or storage sites far fewer weapons than the Ukrainian Armed Forces” and denied security guarantees necessary for establishment of new FPBs and

a patrol hub in the six locations identified by the SMM. Presence of such FPBs in border areas would greatly enhance both monitoring capabilities of the SMM and the safety and security of the monitors. Instead, what we witness are the new restrictions introduced by the Russian side in the beginning of this year for the SMM's access to border crossing points and Chervona Mohyla railway station in Russia-occupied border areas of the Luhansk region.

While the number of restrictions of access of the SMM in Russia-occupied territories of Donbas keeps growing, and monitoring of weapons continues to be limited due to security considerations, we strongly support the SMM's efforts to enhance its remote technical monitoring to complement the observations of its ground patrols. In this connection we would recall a case of last Friday, when two armed members of the Russian armed formations stopped the SMM and denied it passage into the village of Molochny; the SMM then launched a mini-UAV to fly over this area, but it was fired at by the militants. We again urge the Russian side to assume responsibility for the safety of civilian unarmed monitors and their assets.

In addition to the regular restrictions imposed by the Russian armed formations upon the OSCE monitors, we took note of the latest allegations on the interference of the Russian intelligence in the work of the SMM. We expect the Mission to conduct thorough investigation into these very serious allegations and to share the relevant findings.

We welcome that the OSCE now has at its disposal such an important asset as long-range UAVs, which resumed their operation in the reporting period. We strongly condemn the two recent incidents when the Russian fighters tried to shoot down LR UAVs by the Russian surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft gunfire and once again remind the Russian side of its full responsibility for such hostile actions and their implications.

We reiterate that enhanced technical capabilities of these UAVs must be effectively exploited with the aim to provide monitoring in those areas where the Russian armed formations in Donbas are most persistent in denying access of SMM patrols, that is in the areas adjacent to the Ukrainian-Russian state border, which are occupied by Russia. This monitoring is important to ensure that the SMM implements its mandate concerning the establishment of facts and reporting on violations of OSCE principles and commitments. Such violations happen on a daily basis as Russia's military and non-military supplies breach the border with Ukraine.

Because of these grave violations, the Russian military brought Buk surface-to-air missiles to Donbas and shot down the Malaysia Airlines Flight MH 17 with 298 people on board. Two days ago we marked the fourth anniversary of the tragic deaths of these innocent victims. It is important to bring the perpetrators of this horrible crime to justice.

Ambassador Apakan,

In many meetings of the Permanent Council, to which you presented your reports, we encouraged the SMM to pay more attention to a part of its mandate relating to monitoring and supporting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Whenever such monitoring is impeded, the Mission must report on such

restrictions, in full accordance with its mandate. The human rights situation in Donbas under the Russian occupation administration is very worrisome. Restrictions on freedom of expression, especially for the media and civil society; compulsory affiliation denying people their right to the freedom of assembly and the freedom of thought; raids by the Russian armed formations on a Muslim cultural centre in Donetsk city – all those facts were established by the SMM despite its limited ability to monitor due to severe restrictions imposed by Russia. Whereas promotion and protection of human rights across the OSCE region is at the heart of the OSCE activities, we continue to witness glaring violations and oppression in the areas under Russia's occupation. We encourage the SMM to pay special attention to this topic.

Equal attention must be paid to other Russia-occupied territories of Ukraine: the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which are also covered by the mandate of the SMM. While the Russian occupation administration, despite numerous calls of the international community, continues denying the SMM's direct access to the Crimean peninsula, we call for indirect monitoring from the Mission's presence in mainland Ukraine. The information received and registered by the SMM's Office in Kherson in its contacts with local population and people crossing the administrative boundary line between Kherson region and Crimea would be an added value in the Mission's activities and a key indicator of its ability to fully implement the mandate.

Concluding my statement, I wish to once again thank Ambassador Sajdik and Ambassador Apakan, as well as the entire SMM team for their hard and dedicated work of contributing to peaceful resolution of the conflict, started by Russia, and to upholding the OSCE principles and commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.