



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 1320th meeting of the Permanent Council
17 June 2021

Madam Chairperson,

I thank you for introductory remarks on the most recent visit paid by Chairperson-in-Office Ann Linde to Ukraine this week. As noted by Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, this visit, second in 2021, clearly demonstrates that Ukraine remains on the top of OSCE's agenda as Russia continues to threaten security and stability not only of Ukraine, but the wider Azov and Black Sea region and beyond.

We welcome the fact that CiO visited not only Kyiv, but also Mariupol on the Azov Sea coast, and Novotroitske entry-exit checkpoint in Donetsk region. Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine has many dimensions, be it impediments to the freedom of navigation or restrictions to the civilian crossings of the line of contact.

The OSCE engagement remains essential to facilitate resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. During his meeting with Ann Linde, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy stressed the need to resume full-fledged work of the TCG and ensure the SMM monitoring along the temporarily uncontrolled part of the Ukrainian-Russian border, in the temporarily occupied Crimea and in the Azov-Black Sea region.

Maintaining close attention of the international community to the situation along the Ukrainian-Russian state border is critical to prevent Russia from further escalation. Despite previous announcements by Russian officials, only a small part of Russian troops were withdrawn, no more than 12 thousand out of more than one hundred thousand deployed.

This threat was underlined by G7 leaders in their Summit Communiqué of 13 June, in which they called on Russia to alleviate tensions, act in accordance with its international obligations, and to withdraw its military troops and materiel at the eastern border of Ukraine and on the Crimean peninsula.

G7 has also unequivocally stated that Russia is a party to the conflict, not a mediator. We reiterate our call to the Russian side to recognize its role as a party to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and start meaningful negotiations on peace. Without such recognition, further progress is hardly achievable.

Yesterday, at the informal briefing organized by the Swedish Chairpersonship, Ambassador Morel was on the one hand diplomatic not to undermine his mediator role, but on the other hand quite precise on the need by Russia to ensure proper involvement into implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Regrettably, as of now, we observe that Russia's intention to undermine Ukraine's statehood, sovereignty and territorial integrity remains unchanged. In his recent interview on 9 June to the TV Channel "Russia-1", President Putin was again speaking about Russians and Ukrainians being allegedly one people. Thirty years after collapse of the Soviet Union, well known by continued practice of "Prison of nations" by the Russian empire, it is high time for the Russian leadership to recognize reality and allow Ukraine to live in peace as a sovereign nation state.

Intimidation and armed attacks by Russia must stop. Although the number of ceasefire violations along the line of contact has decreased in the past two weeks, they remain too many. On 11 June, Ukrainian serviceman was killed by shelling by the Russian armed formations near Vodiane. Russia's military drills close to the border with Ukraine continue: on 14 June, bombers "Su-34" trained to carry out strikes against targets on the ground in Voronezh region of Russia, neighbour to Ukraine's Luhansk region.

The second part of my statement today will be devoted to the dire humanitarian situation in the Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine, which only deteriorates.

9 June was the 7th anniversary since the Russian armed formations seized in 2014 the "Izolyatsia" Art and Culture Foundation in the Donetsk city and converted it into a prison with torture chambers and weapon storage facilities. In these years, dozens and hundreds of people were illegally detained in this building, including journalist Stanislav Aseev, whom we regularly recalled among others in the PC meetings until he was released in December 2019.

In Crimea, local residents continue to be systematically detained under trumped-up charges, based on the so-called "testimonies of anonymous witnesses", whenever the Russian special services feel the need to demonstrate unacceptability of any dissent with Russia's occupation. According to the data collected by the "Crimea Human Rights Group" NGO, in May 2021 the number of Crimean residents illegally sentenced under Russia's so-called anti-terrorist and anti-extremist legislation, inapplicable in the occupied parts of another state, reached 74 persons. Seventeen more are illegally detained under the falsified charges of subversive activities, weapon storage and espionage. In May, 13 new criminal cases were opened against Crimean residents and 6 persons were sentenced for denying forced military conscription to the Russian Armed Forces, which is illegal under international humanitarian law.

The problem of politically motivated persecutions by the Russian occupation authorities in the occupied parts of Ukraine was discussed on 15 June in the MFA of Ukraine during a meeting of a Platform to Coordinate Actions on Release of Ukrainian Political Prisoners by Russia. The Platform agreed on the need to draw additional attention of the international community to this issue. In this vein, we reiterate our call to participating States to enhance pressure on Russia, including by raising this topic in bilateral contacts with the Russian leaders.

Until Russia's temporary occupation of Ukraine's parts of territory ends, the Ukrainian government makes every effort to support those citizens who

remain under occupation. Let me inform delegations on several steps undertaken in this regard this month.

First, the residents of the occupied territories belonging to the priority groups aged 65 and older are now able to register for vaccination against Covid-19 in 10 vaccination centres established in the government-controlled areas close to the EECs in Donetsk, Luhansk and Kherson regions. Those who apply for vaccination are allowed to cross the line of contact without restrictions and self-isolation.

Second, Ukrainian citizens living in the occupied territories can apply remotely to Electronic Court and Electronic Government of Ukraine to receive Ukrainian certificates of birth and childbirth assistance for their newly born children.

Third, educational centres “Donbas-Ukraine” and “Crimea-Ukraine” started operating in the higher educational institutions, colleges, and professional vocational institutions, providing possibility for Ukrainian citizens from the occupied territories to receive education in the government-controlled areas. In 2020, more than 2.000 people used this opportunity. In 2021, free preparatory courses with scholarship provision in July and August were introduced to help future students adapt to new locations. As we face reports on restrictions imposed by the Russian occupation authorities for crossings of applicants to the government-controlled areas, we urge Russia to stop them. Until Russia ends this useless conflict, it must mitigate its impact on local population.

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, Madam Chairperson.