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**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 1267<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
14 May 2020

**Mr. Chairperson,**

In the last PC meeting, we informed participating States on the significant strengthening of the Ukrainian delegation to the Trilateral Contact Group, aimed at intensifying negotiations on the peaceful resolution of Russia-initiated conflict in eastern Ukraine. Same day, the delegation in its new composition met with media representatives. During the meeting, First Deputy Head of the delegation Oleksiy Reznikov reiterated that Ukraine's position remains consistent: Russia must first transfer control over the Ukrainian-Russian border, and only afterwards it will be possible to move on to the political aspects of resolution, including local elections.

The modalities of implementation of the Minsk agreements must be defined between Ukraine and Russia, as parties to the conflict and signatories of those agreements, with mediation of the OSCE. We thank the delegations of Germany and France for their joint statement as participants of the Normandy format, which was delivered to the last PC meeting with the same message. Let me also quote Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine Andriy Yermak, who stressed during a phone conversation with political advisers to the leaders of the N4 states on 6 May that any negotiations with representatives of unrecognized quasi-state entities are unacceptable.

To this end, we need to stop the self-proclaimed monopoly of the Russian occupation administration to speak on behalf of the local residents of the occupied parts of Donbas. More than a million of IDPs who were forced to leave their homes since 2014, as well as peaceful residents of the occupied areas, who have not been involved into the Russian armed formations and do not hold Russian passports, deserve the right to be heard. We continue to look for the possible options to engage them into the settlement process.

We remain committed to the search of any possibilities to move forward from the deadlock brought by Russia's persistent unwillingness to recognize its role in the

armed conflict. I would remind that Ukraine has many times demonstrated its constructive approach, in particular by giving its consent to the so-called “Steinmeier formula” in September 2019 and re-launching the disengagement process to pave the way for the N4 Paris Summit in December 2019. Regretfully, the Russian Federation does not act likewise, as regularly reiterated by many delegations in this hall.

The very first steps necessary to proceed with resolution of the conflict, that is security provisions of the Minsk agreements and the N4 arrangements, still wait for their implementation by Russia.

The Russian armed formations continue delivering fire at Ukrainian military positions and civilian locations. On 9 May, two private houses were shelled in Triokhizbenka. On 10 May, a grenade from automatic grenade launcher hit a private house in Avdiivka. Fortunately, no one was hurt. The Russian proxies regularly place heavy weapons in the residential areas and use local residents as a human shield. On 11 May, the SMM reported on six towed howitzers in violation of withdrawal lines in the occupied Luhansk city. Let me stress it again to the Russian side: there can be no progress in resolution of the conflict, which started more than six years ago, until a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire is established. In this connection, we expect Russia to demonstrate constructive approach while discussing within the TCG the modalities of the new ceasefire regime, as agreed earlier by the Foreign Ministers at the N4 video conference.

We stand ready to move forward in implementing other N4 arrangements: to discuss a compromise on a package solution concerning 3 new disengagement areas; to use mirror approach for simultaneous opening of new crossing points at the contact line, and to elaborate an updated mine clearance plan, although Ukraine’s proposals on this issue have already three times been blocked within the TCG by the Russian side.

Fulfilment by Russia of its own commitments remains critical for improving dire security and humanitarian situation in the occupied territories of Donbas. For its part, Ukrainian authorities make every possible effort to mitigate the consequences of Russia’s aggression in Donbas for residents of government-controlled parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. On 8 May, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy paid working visit to Luhansk region. The Head of Ukrainian State has in particular visited Zolote in Popasna district, in which the houses for IDP families are rebuilt at public expense, and inspected the Severodonetsk – Stanytsia Luhanska road, which is currently repaired.

We remain seriously concerned on the situation in the occupied parts of Donbas and Crimea related to the spread of coronavirus. As the delegation of Ukraine emphasized in our statement to the FSC meeting last week, Russia continues to hide data on the spread of the virus in the temporarily occupied territories, neglects the lives and health of the local population and illegally detained Ukrainian citizens. The Russian occupation authorities restrict access of international organisations and humanitarian missions, in particular SMM and ICRC, to those territories. Thus, they deprive population of critical aid and prevent the Ukrainian government and the world community from verifying information provided by human rights organizations on the lack of overall health care and low coverage of the population with coronavirus diagnostics in temporary occupied territories of Crimea and Donbas. We again urge

the Russian side to lift all restrictions on the access of international bodies to those territories.

The Russian side must also stop intimidating the SMM monitors, already present on the ground in the occupied parts of Donbas. We severely condemn yet another attack by the Russian armed formations on the SMM patrol, this time on 8 May in Horlivka, when armed militants were forcing monitors to take pictures of their identity cards and of the mini-UAV, and did not allow the patrol members to enter their vehicles and leave for almost three hours.

We thank the Albanian Chairmanship for convening another informal briefing by the SMM Chief Monitor on 15 May. We hope a comprehensive information on the current environment for the SMM in the occupied parts of Donbas, which will be provided by Ambassador Cevik, will contribute to diplomatic pressure on Russia in order to make it cease violations of the Mission's mandate.

I would also remind you on another flagrant violation of the SMM mandate by the Russian Federation, that is full denial of access of the Mission to the occupied Crimean peninsula. Because of that, we are deprived of verified information on the developments in Crimea and Sevastopol, in which the occupation authorities continue persecuting dissenting voices under far-fetched accusations. On 7 May, illegal detention period was extended until 15 September for pro-Ukrainian activist Oleg Prykhodko, accused of so-called "terrorism" and "manufacture of explosives" for hoisting Ukrainian flag in his private house in Crimea.

Persecutions of activists, journalists, lawyers and human rights defenders, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars by origin, remain a main tool of the occupying Power to strengthen its control of Crimea. Let me refer to the data gathered by the NGO "Crimean Tatar Resource Center" and presented on 8 May on human rights violations in the occupied Crimea for the first quarter of 2020. According to them, during the reporting period, Russian security forces conducted 15 searches, 25 detentions and 28 interrogations, interviews and so-called "conversations". The total number of arrests was 97 including 13 new arrests and 84 extensions of detention periods. 127 cases of violation of the right to a fair trial, 48 cases of violation of the right to physical integrity, and 15 cases of transfer of political prisoners from Crimea into the territory of the Russian Federation were recorded. Most of them were targeted against the representatives of the indigenous Crimean Tatar people. This practice must be stopped. We remind the Russian side of its obligations as an occupying Power.

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, militants and their hardware from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and fully implementing its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**