



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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**Statement on “Russia’s ongoing aggression against Ukraine
and violations of OSCE principles and commitments”**

As delivered by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1089th meeting of the Permanent Council,
11 February 2016

Mr. Chairman,

This day one year ago the leaders of Germany, France, Ukraine and the Russian Federation met in Minsk. Long hours of negotiations resulted in signing on the following day the Package of Measures on implementation of the Minsk Agreements. A solid attempt was made to advance de-escalation and peaceful resolution in Donbas based on agreed framework. However, although the first provision of the document contained commitment to comprehensive ceasefire, a full-fledged offensive by the Russian regular troops and militants on the Ukrainian city of Debaltseve immediately followed. Later we observed other outbursts of violence, provoked by the pro-Russian militants, including summer attacks on Maryinka and Krasnohorivka and escalation since November after two months of relative calm.

Ukraine, for its part, has remained committed to implementation of the Minsk Agreements as a roadmap for peaceful resolution in Donbas since the signing of the first documents in September 2014. We have invested significant efforts on the implementation track, while these efforts were not reciprocated by other signatories.

Ukraine has consistently abided by agreed measures to ensure the sustainable ceasefire as a crucial prerequisite for de-escalation. We remain committed to the ceasefire now as the Ukrainian soldiers are allowed to open fire in response to continuous provocations only in case of direct threat to their lives. Ukrainian forces have withdrawn the heavy weapons to designated sites and rendered all necessary assistance to the OSCE SMM to monitor and verify. The Mission’s reports testify to the unhindered access of the monitors throughout the government-controlled areas of Donbas. The Ukrainian authorities will continue to take efforts to ensure that the SMM does not encounter impediments.

Ukraine has taken steps on implementation of agreed provisions relating to the political process. The Parliament of Ukraine adopted laws on peculiarities of self-governance in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, on granting pardon and amnesty, it adopted a resolution on establishing the area of application of peculiarities of self-governance. The President and the Parliament took forward the constitutional reform

aimed at decentralization. In August 2015 constitutional amendments on decentralization, which received support of the Venice Commission and included the special order of self-governance in certain areas of Donbas, were adopted by the Parliament of Ukraine in the first reading. In October the Ukrainian representatives in the TCG presented a concept on modalities for the conduct of local elections in certain areas of Donbas in accordance with the Ukrainian legislation and OSCE standards.

We see no alternative to continuing moving forward the path of peaceful resolution, charted by the Minsk Agreements, through three consecutive stages: de-escalation, stabilization and recovery of Donbas. In contrast, the Russian Federation has not implemented a single undertaken commitment. Its military units stay in Donbas, full military, logistical and financial support is provided to the illegal armed groups through the uncontrolled sections of the Ukrainian-Russian border.

Distinguished colleagues,

The current developments on the ground prove to the continuing non-implementation by Russia and its proxies of the undertaken commitments. The number of the ceasefire violations is on the rise. On 5 February, for instance, it amounted to 84 cases, the largest number since August 2015. 25% of armed provocations, registered that day, were carried out with the use of 82 mm and 120 mm caliber mortars – the heavy weapons that must have been withdrawn in line with the Minsk Agreements.

The illegal armed groups concentrate their shellings and attacks mainly on the Ukrainian positions and settlements near the Donetsk airport, Horlivka, Maryinka and Krasnohorivka. The tension is high in Mayorsk and Zaytseve. On 4 February 160 mortar rounds were fired by the militants at these cities, which proved to the timeliness of the decision to close the crossing point “Zaytseve” until the security of the civilians could be guaranteed. This Tuesday the militants resorted to shelling of the crossing point “Maryinka” while many civilians were around. Fortunately, no one was injured as the Ukrainian servicemen arranged prompt evacuation of civilians. A video footage of the incident can be found at our Mission’s accounts in social network.

The armed provocations by the militants led to new casualties among the Ukrainian servicemen and the peaceful civilians in Donbas. 1 Ukrainian soldier was killed and 16 were wounded between 4 – 9 February. The Ukrainian law-enforcement has launched an investigation in relation to the tragic incident on 10 February when a passenger minibus was destroyed by a mine on the way to a crossing point “Novomykhaylivka”, leaving 4 people dead.

The unabated armed provocations by the militants are accompanied by serious and systemic freedom-of-movement restrictions for the OSCE SMM in the occupied areas. As follows from the Mission’s reports, the vast majority of incidents took place in areas not controlled by the government of Ukraine. Access to the border areas remains particularly problematic. We view all impediments to the SMM’s monitoring and verification activities as unacceptable. We remind the Russian Federation of the

undertaken commitment to ensure full and unhindered access of the SMM in line with its mandate and the Minsk Agreements.

Mr. Chairman,

Local population in the occupied areas continues to suffer from intimidation, extortion, confiscation of property, hostage-taking. Many facts of disappearance and killings of local residents have emerged. Among the most recent examples – abduction for ransom by the militants in occupied Horlovka of local businessman Ayaz Hasanov. After being taken hostage for a couple of days he was found killed.

We remain concerned over the destiny of many local residents, illegally detained by the militants on allegations of “pro-Ukrainian views” or “espionage on behalf of the Ukrainian Armed Forces”. At the past OSCE PC meeting we informed of hostage-taking of a well-known scientist Ihor Kozlovskiy and leader of the volunteers’ organization “Responsible citizens” Mariya Cherenkova in Donetsk. Their destiny, as well as of many other local residents, remains unknown.

We are alarmed over the militants’ threats to execute the captured Ukrainian servicemen, as it was recently announced by so-called “DPR ombudsperson” Morozova. We condemn the treatment in Donetsk of a captured Ukrainian soldier Yevhen Chudnetsov, who was threatened with death, but was later announced a so called “jail sentence” of 32 years.

We urge Russia to take immediate and resolute steps for release of all hostages and illegally detained persons on the basis of “all-for-all” principle, as it was agreed in Minsk. We are confident that Russia is fully aware of the responsibility war crimes entail for the perpetrators and those who stand behind them.

Distinguished colleagues,

The delegation of Ukraine has regularly informed the OSCE Permanent Council of the continuous presence of the regular units of the Russian Armed Forces in Donbas, merging with the illegal armed groups and ignoring the commitment on withdrawal from the Ukrainian territory.

Notable in this regard is that the «sudden combat readiness inspection», launched on 8 February for troops of the Central and South Military Districts of the Russian Federation, including near the Ukrainian border and in the illegally occupied Crimea, was synchronized with military exercises of the so-called 1st and 2nd Army Corps in the occupied areas of Donbas, which were launched at the same time.

Decoration of three Russian officers from the JCCC with medals of the so-called “DPR” is another exemplary fact, made public recently.

Mr.Chairman,

We consistently draw attention to the dire human rights situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, illegally occupied by Russia.

We welcome the European Parliament's Resolution of 4 February, reiterating strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia and underlining the unacceptable curtailment of the fundamental human rights at the peninsula by the occupying authorities. In particular, it notes systematic attacks on human rights and fundamental freedoms of those persons who oppose the illegal occupation, suppression of any democratic manifestation and freedoms in the Crimea, including functioning of free media.

Ukraine is grateful to the European Parliament for its support of the initiative to launch an international mechanism of negotiations aimed at restoring Ukraine's sovereignty over Crimea in the "Geneva plus" format and for its call to the Russian Federation to start negotiations on the de-occupation of Crimea.

Mr.Chairman,

The decisions taken in Moscow led to Russia's military intervention in Crimea and later Donbas as the second stage of aggression. Russia has shown its readiness to use military force to change borders between states in Europe in flagrant violation of the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act. We remind that attempted annexation of Crimea, which remains an integral part of Ukraine, is unprecedented since the Second World War. It remains up to Moscow to take decisions that would lead to full implementation of the commitments it has undertaken under the Minsk agreements, to de-occupation of the illegally occupied parts of Ukraine. Drawing lessons from the history of Europe, we encourage Russia to abandon its own dangerous interpretations of historical justice (just yesterday Minister S.Lavrov asserted that "Historical justice is the greatest engine of the history of development of events"), and instead re-engage on what all had agreed to – fundamental principles of peaceful relations between the participating States.

We urge Russia to restore its respect for the norms of international law and the OSCE principles and commitments, to halt its aggression against Ukraine and reverse the illegal occupation and annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

Thank you, Mr.Chairman.