



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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**Statement in response to Mr. Flavien Schaller,
Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission
at two Russian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border**

As for delivery by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk
to the 1144th meeting of the Permanent Council,
4 May 2017

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of Ukraine warmly welcomes Mr. Flavien Schaller, the Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border, back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his report and presentation.

We wish to express our appreciation of the work of the Mission that operates in difficult and restrictive conditions. Due to the lack of political will on the part of Russia, the OSCE Observer Mission remains limited to two out of eleven checkpoints of the Russian-Ukrainian state border segment not controlled by the Ukrainian authorities, despite objective needs and strong support of the OSCE participating States for expansion of the geographic scope of the Mission and monitoring between these border crossings.

Although with limited mandate, small size and significant restriction of the freedom of movement within the BCPs imposed by the Russian authorities, the Mission continues to provide useful information concerning Russia's support for the illegal armed formations in Donbas. While Russia committed itself to withdraw its military, mercenaries and fighters from Donbas, their illegal flow into Ukraine continues. On the weekly basis the OSCE Observer Mission reported about high numbers of men and women in military-style clothing crossing from Russia into Ukraine and back. During the reporting period 2.546 crossings of people in military-style outfits were observed, thus bringing the total to 32.929 crossings of this category since the beginning of the OM's operation. These figures are from only two BCPs to which the Mission has access. It can serve as a mere indication of such traffic that we cannot monitor at the 409 km Ukrainian-Russian state border segment not controlled by the Ukrainian authorities.

This category of people easily crosses the border in groups of between five and 20 persons, either on foot, or in a bus/minivan with tinted windows. On 12 March 2017 in Gukovo the Mission observed an overloaded van entering the BCP from the Russian Federation with four men in “Gorka style” military uniform and transporting military boots and uniforms, bulletproof vests, military rucksacks and other items.

Russian citizens acting as foreign fighters or mercenaries continue to fight against the Ukrainian authorities in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine in Russia-instigated conflict. The Russian Government conceals Russian losses and casualties. A fraction of the losses is revealed by reports of the OSCE Observer Mission, in particular about 27 ambulances and 14 funeral minivans marked with “Cargo 200” a code for Russian military casualties, crossing from Ukraine into Russia during the reporting period. Russia’s actions continue to breach the Minsk agreements as well as the OSCE principles and commitments, in particular regarding border security and combating terrorism.

Mr. Chairperson,

We condemn in the strongest terms the Russian practice of sending so-called “humanitarian convoys” in violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and the principles of international humanitarian law. To date, the OSCE Observer Mission registered 62 Russian convoys that have crossed the Donetsk BCP since August 2014.

We insist that the humanitarian assistance be delivered based on the international mechanism as envisaged by the Minsk agreements. We also strongly urge the Russian Federation to send deliveries of humanitarian nature through border check-points, controlled by the Government of Ukraine.

Mr. Chairperson,

The violence, perpetrated by the Russia-backed illegal armed formations of the certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, underlines the imperative of comprehensive border monitoring in connection with continued flows of military equipment and personnel from Russia in the non-government controlled areas of Donbas. We emphasise the utmost relevance of the Minsk Protocol of 5 September 2014 whereby the signatories committed themselves to ensure permanent monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian border and verification by the OSCE with the creation of security zones in the border regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

We welcome the informal consultations held by the Chairmanship on measures to improve transparency in the part of the Ukrainian-Russian state border currently not controlled by the Ukrainian Government. In this regard particular attention must be attached to implementation of the updated SMM’s Concept Paper of 6 September 2016 on Monitoring the Ukrainian-Russian State Border as well as to enhancing the

OSCE Observer Mission`s capabilities for effective monitoring, including through the use of binoculars, technical surveillance equipment and UAVs. We also encourage active OSCE facilitation in developing agreed preparatory measures with regard to the reinstatement of full control of the State border by the Ukrainian Government in accordance with the Minsk agreements and based on the OSCE Border Security and Management Concept.

Ukraine deeply regrets that the Russian Federation continues to be the only country objecting the expansion of the OSCE Observer Mission. Russia`s position on this issue serves as litmus test of Russia`s readiness to peacefully resolve the conflict which it started. Such readiness is so far absent. We reiterate our persistent call on Russia to proceed to permanent monitoring and verification by the OSCE on the Ukrainian-Russian state border with creation of the security zone in border areas of Russia and Ukraine which would become a major input into the conflict resolution efforts.

In conclusion, we once again thank Mr. Schaller and his able team for their dedicated work and wish every success in their future activities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.