



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 1275th meeting of the Permanent Council,
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Mr. Chairperson,

Last week's discussions at the meeting of the Permanent Council with participation of Special Representative Heidi Grau and Chief Monitor Halit Cevik have clearly demonstrated that the Russian side maintains its position on the use of illegal armed formations in Donbas to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity while denying at the same time Russia's direct role and responsibility for this.

By fuelling violence in Donbas, the Russian Federation continues to exert pressure on Ukraine, ignoring all commitments and obligations, with the purpose of returning Ukraine to Russia's so-called "sphere of influence". The hybrid warfare takes lives and devastates heavily populated areas.

Only in the last week (8–14 July), 5 Ukrainian militaries were killed and 24 wounded. The most outrageous incident took place on 13 July, when the Russian armed formations first provided security guarantees for evacuating the body of Ukrainian soldier killed by the blast of an unknown explosive device, but later ambushed a group of three Ukrainian servicemen, who were trying to do that. As a result of attack, one military medic was killed, and two other servicemen were wounded. Let me stress that the members of the evacuation command had all necessary medical insignia as foreseen by the norms of international humanitarian law. In this regard, Ukraine proceeds from the premise that this provocation has all signs of a war crime. We call on participating States to severely condemn this incident and strengthen the pressure on Russia in order to force it to live up to its peace commitments undertaken as a party to conflict in Donbas.

While the Russian Ambassador declares "unsatisfactory dynamics of the negotiations process" and "non-implementation of the predominant majority of the Paris Summit arrangements" to the Permanent Council, the Russian side continues doing whatever it takes in Donbas to undermine the security track of the Minsk agreements and push Ukraine to immediate implementation of its political provisions.

The ceasefire violations continue on the daily basis, including with the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons. The SMM continues to register military activities in the

immediate vicinity of the Ukrainian-Russian state border where there are no border crossing facilities. The Russian proxies prevent the Mission from verifying situation in Petrivske disengagement area, in which the SMM camera is non-operational since its destruction by the Russian fighters on 2 June, the road between Bohdanivka and Petrivske remains mined, and an SMM mini-UAV was deliberately fired by the Russian proxies on 7 July.

Instead of providing the SMM safe and secure access in the Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine in accordance with the Mission's mandate and Paris Summit common agreed conclusions, the Russian side has pushed it into a critical situation, which was highlighted by Chief Monitor last week. The sevenfold decrease (from 236 to 33) of the number of monitors remaining in the occupied areas of Donbas was a direct consequence of Russia-imposed de-facto ban on crossing the contact line for the SMM monitors.

As we have underlined in the last PC meeting, we appreciate the SMM efforts to maintain its operational posture despite severe restrictions imposed by the Russian side in Donbas under the pretext of COVID-19. In the last two weeks, the Mission faced 29 active restrictions of its freedom of movement, all but two in the Russia-occupied areas of Donbas. We again join the calls of participating States to the Russian side to use its influence on the ground to immediately stop violating the Mission's mandate.

As the SMM mandate covers entire territory of Ukraine, we also remind the Russian side that its temporary occupation of Crimea must not be used as an excuse for denying access of the Mission to the peninsula. The SMM should be able to establish facts on the dire situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Crimea and report them to the OSCE participating States.

In this context, let me draw your attention to the recent interim report submitted by the UN Secretary-General on "Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine", which notes the continuing human rights violations by Russia in the occupied Crimea, including torture and other ill-treatment, the impunity of the Russian law enforcement agencies involved in these crimes, inadequate conditions in prisons, cruel and degrading treatment of prisoners, criminalization of freedom of expression in social media, interference in the work of the media and human rights organizations, including those of Crimean Tatars.

In the meetings of the Permanent Council, we often refer to illegal detentions, persecutions and sentences issued to Crimean Tatars as a part of wider campaign of silencing dissenting voices held by the Russian occupation authorities. The UN Mission, I quote, "has documented the fact that the searches and raids of private homes, businesses and meeting places in Crimea conducted between 1 January 2017 and 30 June 2019 disproportionately affected Crimean Tatars". In some cases, the judges based their so-called "verdicts" primarily on the testimony of anonymous witnesses who gave evidence while screened from the public gallery, using voice-altering equipment, preventing the judge and others from seeing or hearing them in their natural state. In other cases, documented by OHCHR, Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation and law enforcement officers reportedly used beatings, electric shocks and suffocation to force victims to incriminate themselves, cooperate

with law enforcement or testify against others. While in detention, some detainees were arbitrarily placed in a punishment cell under various pretexts including failure to greet a prison guard or on the occasion of a major Russian holiday.

The same UNSG report informs that journalists and media workers continued to face interference with their professional activities by the local authorities in Crimea, including law enforcement agencies. These practices included surveillance methods such as phonetapping, being physically followed by law enforcement officers, threats of physical harm, criminal prosecution, arrests and prohibition of entry into the territory of Crimea. Numerous media outlets and individual journalists informed OHCHR that, owing to these risks, they would self-censor the content of their publications, conceal their authorship or limit their reporting to non-political topics and stories.

We join the calls expressed in the Report, to the authorities of the Russian Federation to lift restrictions imposed on the Crimean Tatar community to conserve its representative institutions, to ensure the availability of education in the Ukrainian language, to end the conscription of Ukrainian nationals residing in Crimea into the armed forces of the Russian Federation, to restore the violated property rights of all former owners, and to end the transfers of protected persons outside the occupied territory. We are grateful to all delegations, which raised these issues earlier in the meetings of the Permanent Council, and we encourage them to keep the issue of Crimea high on their agendas.

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.