



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine
at the 840th FSC Plenary Meeting
(14 December 2016 at 10.00, Hofburg)
(Agenda item 3)

Madam Chairperson,

As this is the last regular plenary meeting of the Forum for Security Cooperation before the winter recess let me first of all express sincere appreciation to Portuguese Chairmanship and personally to Ambassador Mira-Gomes for the work done in the third trimester of 2016.

The Forum has been actively engaged in reviewing military aspects of the crisis in and around Ukraine. Our deliberations and evidence presented at the FSC have reaffirmed that the crisis stems from the Russia's military aggression and flagrant violations of OSCE principles and commitments. The delegation of Ukraine is grateful to the OSCE participating States for solidarity and firmness in upholding Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

We warmly welcome the next FSC Chairmanship of Romania and wish them every success in guiding our work in the first trimester of 2017. I avail myself of this opportunity to express also gratitude to the delegation of Poland, the outgoing FSC Troika member, for effectively steering the Forum's work in a difficult time, when the Russian aggression against Ukraine remained a matter of utmost concern for the OSCE community and for our Forum, particularly.

Madam Chairperson,

Regrettably, we are continuing to witness alarming deterioration of the security situation along the line of contact in eastern Ukraine. Intense use of heavy weapons has resulted in a deeply worrying increase in military and civilian casualties. These violations and their further aggravation stem from ongoing unwillingness of the combined Russian-separatist forces to renounce violence.

Over past two weeks the combined Russian-separatist forces have opened fire on the positions of Ukrainian military with an average intensity of **24 times per day. 6 Ukrainian soldiers were killed and 21 were wounded.**

Ukraine is deeply concerned by the rise in fighting along the contact line, which further heightens the risk to civilians. We repeatedly call on the combined Russian-separatist forces to show restraint, respect the ceasefire, fully and verifiably withdraw all Minsk-proscribed weapons, disengage, ensure humanitarian access and full, safe and unhindered SMM access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border. These steps are necessary in order to move toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE fundamental principles and commitments.

We encourage Russia to further progress on the disengagement initiative. We deeply regret that Ukraine's efforts to open an entry-exit checkpoint in Zolote, long-awaited by the local population, are not reciprocated by the Russian hybrid forces. We hope that the movement through the checkpoint will start as soon as possible. Ukrainian side prepared everything needed for this to happen back in March this year. Regular ceasefire violations by the Russian hybrid forces in Stanytsia Luhanska do not allow launching disengagement process in this area. The disengagement of forces and hardware in Stanytsia Luhanska has been postponed several times because the combined Russian-separatist forces repeatedly violated the necessary conditions, in particular the ceasefire within 7 days. The violation of ceasefire again took place on 9 and 10 December. We call on Russia to implement the undertaken commitments in good faith. For its part, Ukraine remains ready to proceed to withdrawing forces and hardware in this area as soon as ceasefire and other provisions of the Framework decision are met.

**Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished colleagues,**

Answering question of the Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera correspondent in his interview on December 1, 2016, «Why doesn't Russia withdraw its heavy weapons from southeastern Ukraine?», Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said: «Statements regarding the presence of Russian heavy weapons in southeastern Ukraine, which must be withdrawn, is clearly science fiction». However, the presentations of evidence of Russian weaponry in Donbas made by the Ukrainian delegation in the course of the year convincingly prove the facts of such presence. We have not received any meaningful explanations from the Russian side.

Meanwhile another batch of military reinforcement for Russia-backed militants was reported to have arrived from Russia – 4 tanks were brought to Yasynuvata station on 10 December.

Another case of the presence of the Russian military personnel has been registered by the SMM in Donbas. According to the SMM report of 9 December in the so-called "DPR"-controlled Sakhanka (north-east of Mariupol), the SMM was approached by a civilian vehicle with Russian Federation licence plates and four men armed with assault rifles (AK-47) who

engaged in conversation with the SMM. They were wearing military-type clothes. Two of them introduced themselves as Russian citizens.

This situation yet again underscores the need for establishing an effective and comprehensive OSCE monitoring at the Ukrainian-Russian border adjacent to the territory of the Donbas region, not controlled by the Government of Ukraine.

The SMM must have full freedom of movement and access in the occupied areas of Donbas, as restrictions are a result of attempts to conceal armed provocations against the Ukrainian forces, concentration of weaponry and military movements in the vicinity of the contact line and in the border areas.

Madam Chairperson,

We urge the Russian Federation to implement without delay the necessary initial steps of the Minsk agreements: securing ceasefire, withdrawal of weapons, and full freedom of movement for the SMM for effective monitoring. These important steps are an exact reflection of immediate measures as agreed by Russia in the Minsk package of measures. They remain unimplemented and were in the focus of the Trilateral Contact Group meeting of 7 December.

We urge Russia to return to the tenets of the international law, to cease its aggression against Ukraine and reverse the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.