



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Statement in response to Ambassador Martin Sajdik, Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, and Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1234th meeting of the Permanent Council,
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Madam Chairperson,

Ukraine joins other delegations in welcoming the CiO's Special Representative Ambassador Sajdik back to the Permanent Council. We also welcome new SMM Chief Monitor Ambassador Çevik in his first appearance to the Permanent Council. We thank both of you for your comprehensive and thought-provoking reports.

Ambassador Sajdik,

The role of the Trilateral Contact Group, in which you represent the OSCE as a mediator between Ukraine and Russia as parties to the conflict, remains indispensable in facilitating implementation of the Minsk agreements, which must bring an end to the hostilities in Donbas. Establishment of a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire regime, disengagement and demining, disarmament and withdrawal of the Russian armed formations from the occupied parts of Donbas – fulfilment of all those security provisions is urgently needed to allow further progress on the political track, where Ukraine has implemented everything it could at this stage, and even more.

Yesterday President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy stressed that Ukraine fully supports the politico-diplomatic way of resolving the conflict in Donbas. This is evidenced by the "re-launch" of the work of Ukrainian representatives in the Trilateral Contact Group, steps towards the intensification of the Normandy format and disengagement of forces and means in Stanytsia Luhanska.

On Stanytsia Luhanska Volodymyr Zelenskyy stated, I quote: "I believe this is the first step towards permanent ceasefire throughout the delimitation line, which took place due to the unblocking of the Minsk process. I understand that only time and concrete steps can confirm to everyone that the parties fulfil their obligations. I

do not want to promise peace tomorrow, but there is a fragile hope for the beginning of the end of the hot phase of war," the Head of State stressed in his video address.

The Ukrainian side will carefully follow the process of its implementation and ensure that the local civilian population does not face additional security risks related to it.

However, the Russian side continues to violate provisions of the TCG Framework decision. The SMM registers Russian military presence inside Stanytsia Luhanska disengagement area including the one at the forward positions of the armed formations of the Russian Federation. This is a clear breach of the para 8 of the said document which clearly envisages the ban of military presence at the disengagement area except for the Ukrainian part of the Joint Center for Control and Coordination (JCCC).

The last daily report of the OSCE SMM lists nine men in military-style clothing, who were illegally wearing blue armbands with "JCCC" written on them. This is nothing but brutal attempt to legitimize Russian military presence inside the disengagement area since as of today only the Ukrainian part of the JCCC still discharges its duty on site. The Russian Federation has unilaterally and groundlessly withdrawn its officers from this bilateral structure. No one, including the representatives of the illegal armed formations, is authorized to replace them.

Along with that, the Ukrainian side has detected at the disengagement area presence of representatives of the so-called illegitimate "Ministry of state security" of the Russian occupation administration in the Luhansk region. They were dressed in civilian clothing and actively worked among the local population for the sake of propaganda and espionage.

Besides, the Russian side has demonstrated its intention to retain the fortified structures of the EECP within the disengagement area and is reluctant in demining and de-fortification of the site. This is another witness of the Russian side intractability.

We strongly urge Russian Federation without delay to eliminate the gaps in implementation of the TCG Framework decision, namely:

- to quit with its military presence in the disengagement area;
- to dismantle its fortification structures on the site;
- to move outside the disengagement area the illegal structures of the EECP.

This is needed for implementation of the Framework decision. Otherwise, the OSCE SMM will be not in a position to verify the disengagement process at Stanytsia Luhanska.

We took note of the findings presented in the SMM report on the increasingly challenging task of achieving commitments to the ceasefire, lack of withdrawal of the Minsk-proscribed heavy weapons and inability of the SMM to ensure a comprehensive and independent monitoring in the border areas due to numerous restrictions of its freedom of movement, imposed by the Russian side. The recent weekly report of 26 June confirmed this trend: the Mission informed on 68 weapons in violation of their respective withdrawal lines, all but two registered in Russia-

occupied parts of Donbas, and almost two hundred weapons outside of designated storage sites, all but 7 in Russia-occupied areas. Hundreds of pieces of the Russian heavy weapons continue to pose direct and serious military threat to Ukraine and its defenders. Much more remains hidden from the SMM's eyes. We have to stress that the progress in demining heavily relies on withdrawal of these weapons from the contact line to the designated storage sites.

As President Zelenskyy noted, Russia does not show goodwill to resolve the conflict. In particular, the Russian Federation did not support the "Bread" ceasefire suggested by Ukraine, shellings are continued, including of medical vehicles, the work of the OSCE SMM is restricted in the temporarily occupied territory of Donbas.

These developments are not encouraging. Kremlin shows no indication of the readiness to abandon its aggressive goals of undermining Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within the internationally recognized borders. The implementation of the Minsk Agreements by Kremlin remains stalled, de-occupation of Crimea has not started, and Ukrainian citizens continue to serve as hostages in Moscow's hybrid warfare against my country. The OSCE principles, norms of international law and binding orders of the international courts remain dead letters for the Russian Federation, which keeps denying its role as a party to the conflict it initiated and continues to fuel.

Instead, Russia resorted to further violations of Ukraine's sovereignty including the so-called "passportization", introducing new measures of economic pressure, preventing ceasefire arrangements and refusing to fulfil the order by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea issued on 25 May.

Strong Russia's military presence in the occupied parts of Donbas combined with unpredictability of Kremlin's military intentions, remind us on the importance of the issue of the Ukrainian-Russian state border for cessation of hostilities in Donbas. The link between transparency at the border and security situation along the contact line does not require any additional explanation. In this connection, I wish to draw your close attention, Ambassador Sajdik, to the paragraph 4 of the Minsk Protocol, which together with the Minsk Memorandum and the Minsk Package of Measures constitute the Minsk agreements. This paragraph, on achieving permanent OSCE monitoring and verification at the Ukrainian-Russian state border with establishment of security zone in border areas of Ukraine and Russia, remains essential as the Russian Federation continues its supplies of weapons, ammunition and manpower to the occupied parts of Donbas, undermining implementation of the other security provisions.

It is now high time for Russia to stop making excuses and to start finally fulfilling its commitments. They include:

- opening the Zolote entry-exit checkpoint, which would greatly reduce queues at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP;
- providing capacity-increasing upgrades to the infrastructure at the existing EECPs, following the similar measures already undertaken by the Ukrainian

authorities and confirmed by the SMM, in particular at Hnutove and Maiorsk;

- lifting numerous impediments imposed by the Russian armed formations at the contact line, in particular on the number of cars permitted to enter the checkpoints. We urge the Russian side to refrain from financing its illegal armed formations in Donbas by bribing civilians for expediting the queuing process at the EECs, which was registered by the SMM.

Implementation of the security provisions by Russia would create a conducive environment for further progress on the political track of the Minsk agreements. What we also urgently need to return political settlement to the framework of these agreements, is dismantling all illegal structures of the Russian occupation administration established by Kremlin following the illegal and fake so-called “elections” held in November last year. The Minsk agreements are very clear on the provision that the local elections in the occupied parts of Donbas must be conducted in accordance with Ukrainian legislation and OSCE/ODIHR standards, which was not the case.

Last, but definitely not the least, the priority attention of the TCG and its Humanitarian Working Group must be focused on the humanitarian track, in which Ukrainian citizens remain hostages of the Kremlin regime. We again urge the Russian side to unblock the process of mutual release of Ukrainian citizens illegally detained by the Russian occupation authorities, to provide access, including by the ICRC, to them and to allow the search for the missing persons. We encourage you, Ambassador Sajdik, to attach the utmost priority to these issues and to ensure, as well, a constructive discussion within the TCG on the issue of mutual release of Ukrainian citizens being illegally held in Russia and the Russian citizens held in Ukraine for committing grave crimes against state and sovereignty.

Ambassador Çevik,

The SMM continues to provide unbiased and verified information on the developments on the ground in a conflict-affected zone, most notably on the security environment. We look forward to the full-fledged implementation of the Enterprise Geographic Information System, which will enhance the SMM’s awareness of the current situation on the ground and provide the Mission with the capacity to inform on the distance to the contact line while reporting on specific locations and damage to residential areas and military positions. We believe such clarifications could discourage the Russian armed formations from continuing military provocations for propaganda purposes.

Even under the severe restrictions imposed by the Russian side, which only continue to be aggravated, the SMM remains capable to register and report on the new indications of Russia’s military activities in the occupied parts of Donbas. Some of these findings include military-type trucks travelling between the uncontrolled segment of the border and military compounds of the Russian armed formations, sophisticated Russian weapons such as “Tirada-2” satellite communication jamming

complex and a surveillance radar system “Kredo-M1”, or cargo railway wagons with unknown content at the railway stations close to the border, and many others.

We welcome the efforts undertaken by the SMM to enhance its observation capacities to overcome, at least partially, Russia-imposed restrictions to its activities by active use of the technical assets. The long-range UAVs hold a special place in these efforts, as they are able to conduct night-time monitoring and observe the distant large areas not reachable for the SMM ground patrols, especially in the border areas. The facts established with the use of these UAVs give rise to serious concerns of the Russian armed formations, which never miss a chance to attack them with the aim either to shoot down or to “blind”. On 27 June, another long-range UAV was lost in the Russia-occupied parts of Donbas, this time in the southern Donetsk region, in the area close to the Sea of Azov and the Ukrainian-Russian state border, in which the Russian proxies regularly deny access to the SMM ground patrols. We strongly condemn this behaviour by the Russian side and remind that it has avoided responsibility for the previous cases of downing long-range UAVs.

We took note of the reported numerous restrictions to activities of the SMM imposed by Russia, for instance, the number of denials of access of the SMM to the border crossing points in the occupied parts of Luhansk regions, which has doubled during the reporting period from 17 to 34. We fully agree that the challenges related to this situation “could be overcome if the SMM opened a patrol hub and forward patrol bases in towns near these border areas”. It is unacceptable that for four years, the Russian armed formations continue to deny necessary security assurances to let this happen. We urge Russia to stop disallowing implementation of the SMM’s mandate and to provide safe and secure access throughout the parts of Ukraine it has occupied.

Another essential part of the SMM’s mandate is to establish and report facts on alleged violations of fundamental OSCE principles and commitments. We reiterate our firm belief that the Mission has to use its unique footprint on the ground in the Russia-occupied parts of Donbas, to which the government of Ukraine has no access, to report on the current developments in the field of observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We are fully aware of the security challenges, which the monitors face in these areas while trying to implement the SMM’s mandate, and we urge the Russian side to stop any threats or intimidation of unarmed civilian observers. Still, we expect the Mission to pay close attention to this part of its mandate. The SMM’s findings on the situation in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas related to religious communities or on a very limited scope for freedom of expression and limited access to information including TV channels, websites, books and publications in the Ukrainian language, are valuable for us. We encourage the Mission to provide more information on these issues, not only in the reports of Chief Monitor to the Permanent Council, but in the daily and weekly reports as well.

More comprehensive reports, Ambassador, would be also welcomed on the “developments related to the Sea of Azov”. A brief information on the “possible effects on the socio-economic situation”, included into your report to the PC, does

not duly reflect the scope of security, socio-economic and humanitarian challenges stemming from the ongoing Russia's militarization of the Sea of Azov, the Black Sea and the occupied Crimean peninsula. As these challenges continue to affect security situation, freedom of navigation and trade far beyond the Sea of Azov, we urge the SMM to enhance its monitoring activities in this field.

Finally, I have to remind that the SMM mandate covers the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, which include the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. As situation in the occupied Crimean peninsula, in particular with observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, remains under the constant attention of this Council, we urge the Mission not to avoid implementation of a part of its mandate and to pay close attention to Crimea. We reiterate once again that launching the distance monitoring through contacts with victims and witnesses of persecutions, lawyers, NGOs, and independent mass media remains a viable option for the SMM in the conditions of persistent denial of access of the ground patrols to the peninsula by the Russian occupation authorities. The Mission could start, for instance, with verifying the most recent reports on the physical dissolution as of 28 June of the Crimean Eparchy's Directorate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church following its expulsion by the Russian occupants from the main UOC Cathedral in the city of Simferopol.

Concluding my statement, I wish to thank Ambassador Sajdik and Ambassador Çevik, as well as the entire SMM team for their hard and dedicated work of contributing to peaceful resolution of the conflict, started by Russia, as well as to upholding the OSCE principles and commitments.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.