



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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Statement
in Response to Ambassador Martin Sajdik, Special representative of the
Chairperson-in-Office, and Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan,
Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine

As delivered by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1121st meeting of the Permanent Council,
1 December 2016

Mr. Chairman,

The Delegation of Ukraine welcomes Ambassador Martin Sajdik, the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Special Representative, and Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, back to the Permanent Council and thanks them for the comprehensive updates on their work.

Ukraine reiterates its consistent support of the activities of the SMM and the Trilateral Contact Group aimed at facilitating implementation of the Minsk agreements. It is a matter of our concern that despite intensive diplomatic efforts, including at the Normandy Summit, the violence instigated by the Russian hybrid forces persists.

The Normandy Ministerial meeting, held on Tuesday, again exposed the lack of Russia's willingness to embark on de-escalation path, as key priorities for the Roadmap got rejected. As before, Moscow perceives this initiative as an instrument for legitimization of the gains of its armed aggression in Donbas. This approach is contrary to the Minsk agreements' logic of peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Meanwhile, regular shellings and attacks of the combined Russian-separatist forces along the contact line, including with the use of heavy weapons, further increase the toll of casualties. On 24-29 November 2 Ukrainian soldiers were killed and 21 were wounded. The SMM has also regularly reported on civilian victims of the violent actions of the Russian hybrid forces and their cynical practice of firing heavy weapons from residential areas.

These disturbing reports highlight once again the urgent need to implement fully and in good faith the security provisions of the Minsk agreements, including the comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire, verified withdrawal of heavy weapons and unfettered OSCE monitoring, including in border areas. To our profound regret, these initial steps, to which Russia committed to in 2014, are yet to be implemented. It also affects the progress on the recently agreed de-escalation steps, in particular the

Framework decision relating to disengagement of forces and hardware of 21 September, which cannot be considered satisfactory.

In its report of 24 November the SMM depicted the situation with opening the entry-exit checkpoint “Zolote”, again blocked by the illegal armed formations. The necessary preparations were completed on the government-controlled side and we were ready for the opening since March. We hope that the arrangements to open the checkpoint till 10 December, reached at the last week’s TCG meeting, will be adhered to by Russia and its proxies to help the local population.

We also urge Russia to halt the ceasefire violations by its hybrid forces in Stanytsya Luhanska instead of simulating their readiness for disengagement in this area. For its part, Ukraine remains ready to proceed to withdrawing forces and hardware in Stanytsya Luhanska as soon as ceasefire and other provisions of the Framework Decision are met.

Distinguished colleagues,

Ukraine strongly supports the SMM in accomplishing its mandate and tasks relating to monitoring the implementation of relevant provisions of the Minsk agreements. It is a matter of concern that the OSCE monitors regularly report on restricted access in the occupied areas of Donbas. As follows from the SMM reports, impediments to the physical access in such areas are complemented by targeted attacks on the SMM’s technical equipment, which further limits Mission’s monitoring capabilities.

The SMM must be persistent in attaining full freedom of movement in the occupied areas of Donbas, in particular those that have been out of reach for the mission for months, and report permanently to the OSCE participating States on the restrictions. We expect transparency on possible “no-go” areas and locations where the SMM monitors refrain from visits after facing intimidation by the Russian hybrid forces.

We continue to expect that the SMM assigns special teams and units to seek access to and monitoring of the uncontrolled sections of the border with Russia on a daily basis and for extended time. For now the SMM assesses its border monitoring capacities as very limited and conditioned, although even under these circumstances the Mission’s findings indicate how Russia’s declarations differ from the real deeds. We note, in particular, that on 24 November the SMM again reported on a vehicle with the so-called “DPR” license plates, entering the territory of Russia through the closed BCP “Marynivka”. As reported, a driver of the car confirmed to the OSCE monitors that the Russian border guards allowed people with so-called “passports” of this fake structure to enter Russia. Such crossings are a flagrant violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, of the OSCE principles. We again urge the Russian delegation to place on record the explanations, which it has failed to do so far.

We encourage the SMM to include in its daily reports the findings of monitoring at railway and transport hubs, in particular, Ilovaysk, Khartsyzk, Rovenki and Debaltseve,

which serve as destination points for echelons and convoys with personnel, weaponry, ammunition and fuel from Russia. In particular, we expect from the SMM its findings on train echelons that, as reported by the OSCE observers on Russian BCP “Gukovo”, regularly cross the border with a heavy load.

We are convinced that the agreed Minsk provision on ensuring permanent monitoring on the Ukrainian-Russian state border and verification by the OSCE with the establishment of security zone in the border areas of Ukraine and the Russian Federation requires urgent implementation. Taking a decision at the Hamburg Ministerial Council would be a critically important step.

Given that the SMM mandate covers the entire territory of Ukraine, which includes Crimea and Sevastopol, we expect the situation in the occupied peninsula to receive due attention of the SMM. We regularly inform the OSCE Permanent Council of dire human rights situation there in view of persisting repressive policies of the Russian occupying authorities, targeting mostly the representatives of the Ukrainian and the Crimean Tatar communities. It remains an urgent task to seek unfettered access of international organizations to monitor the human rights situation on the peninsula. While such access is denied, all other available instruments must be used for permanent monitoring.

Mr.Chairman,

We fully support the efforts of the Trilateral Contact Group, made up of Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE as a facilitator, aimed at seeking practical implementation of the commitments, undertaken in Minsk.

A comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire, other security provisions of the Minsk agreements must remain the immediate focus of the TCG work. Restoring full compliance with the determination of the contact line, registered in Minsk Memorandum on 19 September 2014 and constituting an integral part of the Minsk agreements, should be thoroughly addressed by the TCG. Demilitarization of Debaltseve could serve as an initial step in this direction.

We reiterate that security remains a crucial prerequisite for holding legitimate local elections in certain areas of Donbas according to the Ukrainian legislation and the OSCE standards and under the OSCE/ODIHR monitoring. Safe environment requires de-occupation and disarmament of the illegal armed formations with its huge Russian component, in particular in the command positions.

The release of hostages and illegally detained persons remains an urgent humanitarian priority. At the Normandy ministerial in Minsk Ukraine reconfirmed its readiness to consider all proposals aimed at unblocking the release process. We thank the German and French Ministers for full attention to the pressing nature of this big human problem. We look forward to release before the New Year holiday season. There is a need for immediate access of the ICRC to the hostages in the occupied part of Donbas.

The humanitarian situation in the occupied areas of Donbas remains a matter of deep concern. Although the access of the local population to the humanitarian aid has already been severely limited, the Russia-backed illegal armed formations take further restrictive steps, which are particularly dangerous ahead of the winter season. On 25 November in Donetsk they banned the humanitarian activities of the Czech NGO “People in Need” and forced its international aid workers to leave the occupied areas within 24 hours. It is telling in this regard that the day earlier the SMM was denied access to the storage area in Donetsk, where the Russian cargo trucks from the so-called “humanitarian convoy” were unloaded. The civilian population of the occupied areas of Donbas remains hostage to the anti-Ukrainian policy of Moscow. The feigned concerns that the Russian delegation is so lavish with at the PC meetings continue to be mere instruments of manipulation and propaganda.

We urge the Russian Federation to take responsibility for alleviating the plight of the civilians that found themselves under control of the combined Russian-separatist forces. In particular, we urge Russia to take steps in resolving the payment problem for water supply which acquired a critical urgency. The water payments are collected from the local population, but get pocketed by Russia’s proxies.

Distinguished colleagues,

The developments on the ground demand continued resolve in stimulating Russia towards implementing the undertaken commitments on peaceful resolution. The sanctions, imposed in response to Russia’s aggression, must be maintained until full implementation of the Minsk agreements and de-occupation of the Crimean peninsula. The international engagement and toolbox, assigned to respond to the conflict, should be updated and improved.

In conclusion, I would like to once again reiterate Ukraine’s support to the work done by Ambassador Apakan and Ambassador Sajdik. We remain hopeful that our collective efforts will help achieve de-escalation and peaceful resolution with full respect to Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Thank you, Mr.Chairman.