



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine at the 976th FSC Plenary Meeting

(19 May 2021, via video teleconferencing)

(Agenda item 2, General Statements, on the subject of “Russia’s ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea”)

Mr. Chairperson,

On behalf of the Delegation of Ukraine let me deliver a statement on the subject of “Russia’s ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea”.

Over the last week of 10-16 May, the armed formations of the Russian Federation kept endangering the maintenance of ceasefire regime reached in July 2020 by persistent military provocations against the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The number of ceasefire violations amounted to 84, including with the use of Minks-proscribed weapons, namely 82-, 120mm mortars, 122mm artillery systems, anti-tank guns and flamethrower RPO-A Shmel near 13 settlements (Troitske, Opytne, Novgorodske, Kalynove-Borshchuvate, Lebedynske, Hnutove, Pavlopil, Novozvanivka, Pisky, Vodiane, Shyrokyne, Nevelske, Novoselivky). Diverse grenade launchers, small arms, heavy machine guns, infantry fighting vehicles were extensively used as well.

As a result of these acts of armed aggression by Russia, 1 Ukrainian serviceman was wounded and 1 was killed. During one shelling, the vehicle of the Ukrainian demining team was damaged.

PRESENTATION

Slide 1. On 14 May (15h42), the residential area of Hranitne settlement, Donetsk region, was shelled by the Russian armed formations with the use of a tripod-mounted man-portable antitank gun (SPG-9) (2 shots), prohibited by the Minsk Agreements. Impacts and fragments of the exploded ammunition of the SPG-9 were observed in the yard of a residential house.

Slide 2. On 16 May (07h15-07h25), the Russian armed formations, positioned near temporarily occupied Molodizhne settlement, unleashed fire in the direction of Katerynivka settlement, Luhansk region (coordinates of the explosion sites -

48038`53,84N, 38026`20,54E). Small arms, man-portable disposable rocket-assisted flamethrower RPO-A Shmel (3 shots) and RPG (1 shot) were employed during the shelling.

The RPO-A Shmel flamethrower allows conducting effective fire at a range of up to 600 m. At the site of explosion, the charge of a warhead detonates forming a cloud of fire of 120 cubic meters. Such flamethrowers are in service with the Russian army and were used during the first and second Chechen wars, special operations in Dagestan and Ingushetia, and now in Ukraine. This is another case that confirms the supply by Russia of weapons and military equipment to the temporarily occupied territories in Donbas to further ignite the conflict, which it started and continues to sustain.

Slide 3. The Armed Forces of Ukraine most probably encountered with yet another use by the Russian armed formations of optical or optronic equipment, which is prohibited by the CCW Protocol IV on Blinding Lasers Weapons. It was the case on 10-16 May this year, when Ukrainian servicemen near Stanytsia Luhanska experienced the use by the Russian armed formations of a high-capacity light emitter. The source of it could be so-called blinding lasers that are manufactured in Russia.

Slide 4. The Russian armed formations have been severely interfering with the SMM assets. Take-offs and landings of the Mission's UAVs were also regularly obstructed in the government-controlled areas by the Russian armed formations with the use of R-330-serien modernized electronic warfare systems, extensively supplied by Russia. These actions are meant to put the blame on the Ukrainian side. Only between 04h25 and 17h30 on 17 May, 4 occasions of jamming were observed with the use of such systems located on the temporarily occupied territories of Donbas. According to the information at hand, the radius of operation of these systems may reach 90km.

END of PRESENTATION

High level of interference with the SMM assets is amplified by ongoing severe restrictions of the Mission's freedom of movement in the temporarily occupied areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Moreover, the Mission continued facing restrictions imposed by the Russian occupation administrations in communicating with residents. On 13 May, at a functional school in the temporarily occupied Zolote settlement (60km west of Luhansk), a senior educational staff member denied the Mission access to the school, citing "orders from superiors".

Systematic restrictions of the SMM freedom of movement in the temporarily occupied areas testify to the attempt of the Russian occupation forces to hide preparations for and exercise of provocations aimed at discrediting the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

The occupants continued to contaminate Ukrainian soil with mines of different types, including landmines, prohibited by the Ottawa Convention. These mines are laid on roads, pathways, and areas in close vicinity to residential areas. Such actions destabilize the situation at the contact line and pose imminent threat to civilians.

On 7 May, the SMM observed for the first time about 190 anti-tank mines near temporarily occupied Lohvynove settlement (59km north-east of Donetsk) and 500 anti-tank mines north-west of this area, including those laid on a road. On 11 May, near the residential area of temporarily occupied Oleksandrivka settlement (20km south-west of Donetsk) the SMM mini-UAV spotted for the first time about 174 anti-tank mines and again about 100 landmines (PMN-2), and 86 anti-tank mines. On 11 May, a Russian armed formation conducted remote mining with landmines POM-2 of the area near Pivdenne settlement.

We reiterate our strong condemnation and indignation over the use by Russia and its armed formations of landmines in the Donbas region of Ukraine. We strongly urge the Russian side to immediately cease the supply and further contamination of the temporarily occupied areas of Ukraine with landmines, other types of mines and explosive devices, and proceed with demining.

It should be added that such active mining activities on the temporarily occupied territories of Donbas are taking place against the backdrop of Russia's ongoing reluctance to fulfil its commitments and approve the demining plan in the TCG framework.

The Russian armed formations continued developing their positions closer to the line of contact on the temporarily occupied territory. Thus, on 15 May, such activities took place near the Donetsk airport and Pikuzy village. They also included the use of engineer ammunition to create new trenches. Such actions clearly violate the TCG decision on additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire of last July. These measures prohibit offensive actions, which also imply any attempts to change positional deployment of troops, including additional engineering equipment of positions towards the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian side has been proactively restoring civilian infrastructure either destroyed or damaged as a result of Russia's armed aggression in the conflict-affected areas under the Government control, with the SMM and the Ukrainian side of the JCCC observing adherence to the localised ceasefires. We are grateful to the SMM for its dedicated and restless work on this track. During the last week, Ukrainian demining teams surveyed over 104 hectares of land and destroyed 1901 explosive devices.

Mr. Chairperson,

Amid the ongoing armed provocations and amassing of weapons near the contact line by the Russian occupation forces in Donbas, Russia's military build-up along the border with Ukraine, illegal large-scale concentration of its troops and conduct of military activities in the temporarily occupied Crimea and around the peninsula remain of grave concern to Ukraine.

Russia's refusal to heed the recommendations put forward at the joint PC-FSC meeting on 14 April and numerous appeals of the delegations in the FSC fuel our apprehension.

It is unclear what are the tasks and strength of Russian forces and military equipment remaining after the announced withdrawal of troops.

Despite the statement of the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation on the return of troops to places of permanent deployment, Russia continues to keep about 80,000 personnel and a significant amount of weapons and military equipment near various segments of the border with Ukraine. Warships and boats additionally transferred by Russia from its Northern Fleet and the Caspian Flotilla continue to be deployed in the Azov-Black Sea region.

As of 19 May, significant part of troops and military equipment, that were additionally deployed by Russia along the state border with Ukraine this past April under the guise of snap checks remain in place.

It keeps the total number of Russian battalion tactical groups along the state border with Ukraine at the increased level. Only one third of battalion tactical groups that were additionally deployed, returned to their permanent locations.

Given that most of the weapons and military equipment remain on the training grounds alongside the state border, the threat to national security of Ukraine is pertinent in view of possible employment of these means by Russia to carry out offensive actions against Ukraine.

This threat is aggravated by the absence of transparency and disregard by Russia of the letter and spirit of the Vienna Document 2011 that brings about the commitment of participating States to dispel concerns of other participating States and engage in risk reduction mechanisms.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon Russia to act in line with the recommendations and engage in a meaningful dialogue; provide briefings on its military activities, which would include information regarding forces and military equipment remaining at the border with Ukraine after the withdrawal of troops involved in the military exercises; give substantive answers to the questions raised by the delegation in the course of consultations on 10 April, joint PC-FSC meeting on 14 April as well as follow-up meetings of the PC and the FSC in April and May; ensure effective verification of the withdrawal of troops; and conduct verification activities regarding military units which Russia intends to maintain near the border with Ukraine after the withdrawal.

Esteemed colleagues,

While the Russian Federation remains reluctant to revoke its unlawful decision to close part of the Black Sea until the end of October, we witness ongoing restrictions of freedom of navigation through the Kerch Strait. In April 2021, the average duration of artificial delays by Russia of vessels going from the Black Sea to the Ukrainian ports on the Sea of Azov, Mariupol and Berdiansk, was almost 21 hours. Vessels carrying exports from the ports of Mariupol and Berdiansk were delayed at the exit from the Sea of Azov by the Russian Federation for an average of 70 hours.

In conclusion, we urge the Russian Federation to stop its aggression against Ukraine, reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea, de-occupy parts of Donbas, and restore freedom of navigation in the Black Sea, through the Kerch Strait and in the Sea of Azov. Russia must fully implement its commitments under the Minsk agreements, including the withdrawal of its armed forces, mercenaries, armed formations, and weapons from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.