



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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**Statement on “Russia’s on-going aggression against Ukraine
and illegal occupation of Crimea”**

As delivered by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1110th meeting of the Permanent Council,
21 July 2016

Mr. Chairman,

We are deeply concerned over the sharp deterioration in the conflict-affected areas of Donbas, where the Russian hybrid forces have significantly intensified their shellings, direct attacks and subversive activities.

The developments on the ground testify that in nearly two years after signing the first Minsk documents, Russia continues to defy its commitments. Moscow persists in exploiting a “hybrid war” toolbox to impede Ukraine’s efforts aimed at restoring peace and order on its territory.

Maintaining violence and hostilities in Donbas remains one of the main elements of Russia’s destabilization strategy. As a result, Russia evades constructive engagement in the peace process, paved by the Minsk agreements, as well as follow-up to the arrangements in the framework of the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact group. The agreed steps, like the most recent initiative on the pilot disengagement areas, face immediate impediments on the side of Russia and its proxies.

While the Ukrainian forces remain committed to the Minsk provisions on de-escalation, resorting to fire only in response to grave risks, the combined Russian-separatist forces consolidate their armed provocations with intensive use of heavy weapons. As a result the toll of casualties continues to rapidly grow. Just on one day of 18 July the Ukrainian forces lost 7 soldiers killed and 14 wounded. Since the beginning of July the number of killed Ukrainian servicemen amounted to 27, wounded – to 123. These and other servicemen and scores of civilians would have stayed alive if only Russia had stopped its armed aggression against Ukraine. Unfortunately it does not.

Civilian population remains extremely vulnerable to the attacks of the combined Russian-separatist forces with a number of fatalities registered over the past week. Among the most recent cases – killing of a young resident of Avdiyivka on 19 July by small arms fire from the positions of the Russian hybrid forces. The Russian hybrid forces targeted an electricity grid near Avdiyivka, leaving the city without electricity and water. In the meantime, the Russian officers in the JCCC do not show readiness for extension of security guarantees to carry out repair works.

Distinguished colleagues,

Russia's attempts at escalating the situation on the ground are accompanied by systemic attacks on the SMM. Over the past two months the Russian hybrid forces succeeded in significantly reducing its technical capabilities for monitoring in the occupied areas of Donbas. In the past week we observed another attack – this time aimed at discrediting the Mission and thus undermining the credibility of this international presence, by making absurd FSB allegations concerning the member of the SMM national staff. We witness a classic FSB-style special operation, similar to those that the Russian secret services have carried out in the past. What is notable in this episode is the fact that the state institution of Russia went public in officially accusing a citizen of Ukraine of “espionage on the territory of LPR”. We demand explanations of the Russian delegation.

The disregard towards the SMM, shown by the Russian officers in the JCCC and their subordinate militants, is unacceptable. In particular, it concerns the reported incident of 16 July in Yasynuvata, where the Russian JCCC officer refused to provide the monitors with information regarding the ceasefire violations, also making mocking comments. On the same day in Debaltseve the SMM patrol was deprived of the security guards by the Russian officers of the JCCC. It is in the same vein that the Russia-backed militants act, warning the SMM that “it is not welcome” in the occupied areas of Donbas and informing the monitors about “the directive not to engage with the SMM”.

The SMM again reports about impediments to their contacts with the civilian population in the occupied areas of Donbas. As follows from the SMM weekly report of 12 July, the so-called “LPR” members, acting under the cover of journalists, question people about topics, raised in conversations with the monitors. As a result, locals are afraid of speaking with the SMM.

The SMM continues to experience problems with its freedom of movement and access in the occupied areas of Donbas. During 14-19 July the SMM reported on 23 restriction incidents, including 17 cases of denial of access, all but one registered in the occupied areas of Donbas. Such situation is entirely unacceptable. We urge the Russian Federation to stop the attacks and intimidation by its hybrid forces, to abide by commitments on SMM's unfettered access and full freedom of movement.

Mr.Chairman,

The security degradation on the ground highlights the urgent need to intensify the efforts aimed at ensuring full implementation of the initial security provisions of the Minsk agreements. Regrettably, Ukraine's steps to this end have not been reciprocated by Russia and its proxies. Just as before, it remains a basic requirement for progress on all aspects of the Minsk agreements, including the political track.

Intensive provocations prove what has been obvious for months that uncontrolled border with Russia in the occupied areas of Donbas remains a source of insecurity and escalation. As the Deputy Chief Monitor Hug said on Tuesday, “... *we note a sustained supply with ammunition in areas that are not controlled by the government. Regardless where the weapons are from, that is one thing we are certain in – because we count the shots fired – that there is a steady stream of ammunition toward the front line. That is a fact...*”

Proceeding from this fact and many other facts of Russia's supply of weapons and fighters to Donbas, ensuring full and unhindered OSCE border monitoring and resuming border control by the Ukrainian authorities is a task of critical importance. Establishing a security zone in border areas of both Russia and Ukraine, as agreed in Minsk, remains indispensable. Deployment of an armed police mission, including in the border areas, is necessary to contribute to establishment of safe and secure environment in Donbas.

Distinguished colleagues,

We condemn the continuation by the Russian occupation authorities of repressions against the opponents of the illegal occupation of the Crimean peninsula of Ukraine. A number of Crimean Tatar activists, including Deputy Chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis Ahtem Ciygoz, remain in detention under politically-motivated pretexts. On 20 July the occupation court extended the detention of Mr.Chiygoz, who had been detained in January 2015, and 5 other activists until 8 October.

We draw attention that the Russian “Memorial” human rights center has recently recognized four Crimean Tatars illegally detained under the fabricated charges of “terrorism”, in particular Ruslan Zeytullayev, Ferat Sayfullayev, Rustem Vaitov and Nuri Primov, as political prisoners. The human rights defenders conclude that their case is an element of the repressive policies by the Russian occupying authorities.

We call on the Russian Federation to exercise its responsibility, as an occupying power, for stopping all human rights violations and repressions on the peninsula.

We urge to allow free and unconditional access of international monitors to Crimea.

Mr.Chairman,

Ukraine has consistently shown by practical deeds its commitment to the Minsk agreements. We urge Russia to do likewise. Russia must halt the deliberate escalation it pursues, abide by ceasefire and other security provisions of the Minsk agreements. Ukraine proposed a comprehensive security package, it is on the table but without response from Russia. In the humanitarian area we call on Russia to stop using hostages and illegally detained persons as “bargaining chips”.

Moscow’s continuous course towards escalating the situation and fuelling the hostilities in Donbas constitutes an unabated armed attack on Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, whereby Ukraine has a right to self-defence, as envisaged by the UN Charter. Should the situation on the ground further aggravate, Ukraine will consider necessary measures to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity and protect the safety and security of its citizens.

We urge Russia to halt its aggression against Ukraine. We urge Russia to restore its respect for the norms of international law and the OSCE principles and commitments, to reverse the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

Thank you, Mr.Chairman.