



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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Statement in response to Mr. Michael Georg Link, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

As for delivery by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1141st meeting of the Permanent Council,
6 April 2017

Mr. Chairman,

We join previous speakers in warmly welcoming back to the Permanent Council the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights H.E. Mr. Michael Georg Link and thank him for the comprehensive report, presenting the most important activities of the ODIHR during the last year and highlighting some plans for 2017.

We take this opportunity to reaffirm Ukraine's support for ODIHR's mandate and activities to promote human rights and democracy across the entire OSCE region and assisting participating States in the implementation of their human dimension commitments.

While confronting the ongoing military aggression from a neighbouring state, Ukraine stays committed to the chosen course of profound transformations that will consolidate democracy, good-governance, rule of law and protection of human rights, enhancing the implementation of relevant OSCE commitments.

Ukraine co-operates closely with the ODIHR, its representatives paid numerous visits to Ukraine, many joint projects are fulfilled. We value this co-operation, which assists the efforts of the Ukrainian authorities to strengthen the democratic processes, institutions and civil society.

Distinguished colleagues,

Protection of human dignity, of human rights and fundamental freedoms are at the core of the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. Among many challenges that exist, the most glaring violations of human rights now take place in the Russia occupied or de facto controlled territories of Ukraine – areas where the international organizations are denied permanent monitoring, where independent and pluralistic media have been suppressed.

Three years of illegal occupation of Crimea have been marked by blatant violations of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Crimean population, in particular Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian communities, leaving some activists killed and disappeared.

We encourage the ODIHR to use its mandate and available instruments to contribute to full implementation of the UN GA Resolution “Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)”.

The Russian occupation authorities continue to intimidate, persecute and silence the dissenting voices. There are scores of cases of politically motivated persecution; among them of Ukrainian film-maker Oleg Sentsov and Oleksandr Kolchenko, the Ukrainian activist Volodymyr Balukh, the Ukrainian journalist Mykola Semena, the Deputy Chairmen of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis Ilmi Umerov and Akhtem Chygoz and many others.

We are grateful for the readiness of the ODIHR, reconfirmed today by its Director, to carry out human rights monitoring in the Crimean peninsula illegally occupied by Russia. We will continue to urge the Russian Federation, as an occupying power, to remove all impediments for access and permanent monitoring in Crimea by international organizations.

We reiterate our request to the ODIHR to monitor, using available instruments, Mykola Semena’s so-called trial by occupation authorities and the cases of other Ukrainian citizens – political prisoners in Russia. We call on the ODIHR to use in full its mandate and facilitate the release of all abducted and illegally detained or imprisoned Ukrainian citizens in Russia.

In the meantime, we strongly encourage due monitoring and follow-up activities in connection with the reports of torture in Russia against the illegally detained Ukrainian citizens, as well as serious violations of their rights to a fair trial.

According to the UN estimate, a total of about 10,000 people were killed, and at least 23,200 were injured in Donbas from April 2014 to February 2017.

Nearly 1,7 million of people affected by the situation in the occupied territories have been forced to leave their homes to other regions of Ukraine. People living in the non-government controlled areas of Donbas have been deprived of their basic human rights and freedoms by the illegal armed formations.

This unacceptable situation requires constant attention of the OSCE community and its institutions.

Dear Director Link,

Ukraine and the international community do not recognize parliamentary elections held by Russia last year in the temporarily occupied Crimea and Sevastopol, which was yet another manifestation of Russia’s violation of international law.

We note that the OSCE did not observe the illegal process in the Crimean peninsula, acting with full respect for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the OSCE participating States.

However, the OSCE/ODIHR final report on election observation in Russia contained elements that did not reflect the impact of illegal occupation onto the electoral process and results within Russia itself.

The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a special appeal outlining specific international electoral standards that were affected.

Russia's illegal occupation and attempted annexation of a part of a neighbouring sovereign state is unprecedented in Europe since the end of the World War II. It places unique significant challenges to the established observation methodology, which must be duly updated.

Distinguished colleagues,

Ukraine consistently voices its deep concern over the human rights situation in Russia and its significant departure in the past years from implementation of respective OSCE commitments.

These concerns are aggravated by the presence of direct connection between internal oppression and Russia's external aggression.

The worrying picture of a clampdown on democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms in Russia is exemplified, in particular, by restrictive legislation on "foreign agents" and "undesirable organizations", censorship in the media and internet, restrictions on freedom of assembly, violation of the rights of national and other minorities, accompanied by the rise of aggressive nationalism, chauvinism and xenophobia.

Ten days ago we all witnessed an unprecedented scale of detentions of over a thousand people as they exercised their Constitutional right on peaceful assembly and demanded accountability for corruption.

The state of affairs with human rights, fundamental freedoms and rule of law in the Russian Federation requires close attention and reaction of the ODIHR to assist the country in meeting its OSCE commitments. Russia could benefit from inviting an ODIHR Human Rights Assessment mission to thoroughly explore the situation and present respective recommendations.

Dear Director Link,

The current threats to human dignity and security in the OSCE region, emanating from the gross breach by one participating State of the Helsinki Decalogue principles and commitments, have to be duly taken into account in ODIHR's activities.

We should seek further possibilities to strengthen OSCE human rights protection mechanisms to address new challenges.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity, Ambassador Link, to thank you for your professionalism, dedication and leadership during the term of office as ODIHR Director. We look forward to continuing our close co-operation and wish you every success in all your future endeavors.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.