



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

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**Closing statement by Ukraine
at the 25th Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the OSCE**

Milan, 7 December 2018

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,

At this concluding session, I wish to reiterate gratitude expressed yesterday by my Minister to Chairperson-in-Office, Italy's Foreign Minister Enzo Moavero Milanesi and the entire Italian OSCE Chairmanship team for their tireless work throughout the year and warm hospitality extended in Milan.

This year's Ministerial Council was preceded by another unprovoked act of aggression committed two weeks ago by Russia against Ukraine near the Kerch Strait. We thank all delegations, which condemned this action by the Russian Federation and strongly urged Russia to respect applicable international law, to immediately and unconditionally release the captured Ukrainian servicemen and vessels, and to ensure free and safe passage through the Kerch Strait. It is imperative to hold Russia to account. This act of aggression expanded the scope of violations and atrocities carried out by the Russian Federation in the previous almost five years since it started its armed intervention into the territory of Ukraine. As rightly emphasised by many delegations during the Milan Ministerial Council, the ongoing Russian aggression, being the most serious breach of international law, core OSCE principles and rules-based order in Europe, continues to undermine trust, security and stability in the entire OSCE space. Russia's denial of its responsibility as a party to the conflict continues to take away the lives of people, inflict human suffering and destruction. The use of vague terms like "crisis in and around Ukraine" or "all sides" is exploited by Russia in its massive campaign of propaganda and disinformation to divert attention from its direct role in the conflict and its devastating consequences.

I wish to reiterate the position of Ukraine's Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin concerning the ongoing Russian aggression: "Declarations are not enough, there must be action". Such action is needed in the interests of peace and firm deterrence of the aggressor.

Mr. Chairperson,

While there are many security challenges present in the OSCE area, it is hard to search for common solutions to those challenges when one of the participating

States continues illegal occupation of parts of its neighbours' sovereign territory, showing blatant contempt for such core principles of the OSCE as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, inviolability of frontiers and non-use or threat of use of force. Unwillingness of the Russian Federation to move forward in resolving the conflicts it created has once again impeded, this year in Milan, the adoption of Political declaration and Declaration on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The debates highlighted, regretfully, the fact that Russia does not intend to put an end to this conflict by reversing illegal occupation of Crimea and withdrawing its troops from the territory of Ukraine. This also means that the OSCE should do more and seek to be more effective and persistent in dealing with clear, gross and continuing violations of OSCE principles and commitments. We appreciate the readiness expressed by Slovakia to keep the issue of contributing to resolving this conflict, including attempted annexation of Crimea, high on agenda of their incoming Chairmanship and encourage the Slovak side to spare no efforts in this direction. Engagement of the OSCE executive structures under the guidance of the Chairmanship must be strengthened in order to address the growing number of security and humanitarian challenges brought by the Russian aggression, including in particular deteriorating situation in the occupied territories of Ukraine and militarization of the Black and Azov Seas region by Russia. Yesterday's side event on this topic organized by Ukraine and co-sponsored by 11 participating States provided details on these menacing developments.

We believe that the OSCE has the potential to do more. It should aim at bringing an added value to those dimensions, where more focused OSCE activities are needed. In this vein, we supported the Chairmanship's efforts on the draft documents of this Ministerial Council and introduced a number of specific proposals enhancing our commitments with direct link to security. We welcome the adopted documents, in particular on safety of journalists, and stand ready for further constructive work with the incoming Chairmanship. Bearing in mind that Russia has effectively weaponized its state-owned media for spreading disinformation and propaganda, it is essential for Ukraine to defend itself from Russia's malicious intervention in the information sphere.

In conclusion, I wish to assure our Slovak colleagues of Ukraine's readiness to facilitate their activities aimed at restoring respect for the OSCE principles and commitments and addressing the ongoing gross violations.

The delegation of Ukraine kindly requests that this statement be attached to the journal of this Council's meeting.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.