



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Statement on Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea

As for delivery by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1291st meeting of the Permanent Council
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Mr. Chairperson,

Two days ago, on 24 November, a Ukrainian serviceman was killed by sniper fire of the Russian armed formations near Avdiivka. This is how the Russian side fulfils its part of commitments under the ceasefire agreement of 22 July. While the overall security situation on the ground remains significantly less tense than before the additional measures to consolidate the ceasefire came into force (as confirmed in particular by the SMM reports), such cases demonstrate the level of commitment by Russia to its own obligations.

Every time, when you hear the calls by the Russian delegation addressed to Ukraine to implement the political provisions of the Minsk agreements and to hold the local elections in the certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine without establishing proper security environment, you should always recall that even professional well-equipped servicemen are not safe in Donbas, to say nothing of Ukrainian civilians who would organize elections, or international observers who would monitor them.

That is exactly the reason why the withdrawal of all illegal Russian armed formations and mercenaries is the very first provision of any documents proposed by the Ukrainian side with the aim to resolve the conflict. The plan of joint steps, which was recently submitted by Ukraine for consideration of Russia within the TCG, was no exception.

It has been extensively discussed during the last meeting of the TCG and its Working Groups on 24 and 25 November. We deplore the refusal of the Russian side to consider this document as a basis of further discussions on the resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict in Donbas and Russia's continuous allegations of its nonconformity with the Minsk agreements. This is clearly ungrounded, to say the least.

The Ukrainian side calls to continue consultations on a 24/7 basis to unblock many pressing longstanding issues, progress in which has been artificially impeded by the Russian side under various pretexts.

The most urgent of them are proper functioning of the entry-exit checkpoints in Zolote and Shchastia, and the next stage of the mutual release of detainees. I would remind that the previous release took place more than 7 months ago, on 16 April 2020.

We are also ready to finalize the arrangements reached for 19 demining zones and four new disengagement areas, which lack only the signature by the Russian side. We regret that we were not able to use the time before the winter season to start demining in those zones, as the Russian side was constantly linking this process with political issues. Moreover, the Russian armed formations continued to remotely deliver the banned anti-personnel mines to the Ukrainian positions. The most recent case took place on 22 November near Vodiane.

Now let me briefly touch upon the situation with the EECPs along the line of contact, which has been in a spotlight of the Permanent Council in the recent weeks.

In the last meetings, we witnessed more and more attempts by the Russian side to justify its unwillingness to open its part of the EECPs near Zolote and Shchastia. None of them was convincing. This is a very simple situation: the date of 10 November has been well known to everyone since July this year. The preparations for opening were ongoing on both sides of the line of contact, as it was obvious from the SMM daily reports. Ukraine did its part, and Russia must do the same. If it failed to meet the deadline, it should be clearly stated, and a new date should be announced when the Russian side will finish its preparations.

We urge the Russian side to hurry up, and to open not only Zolote and Shchastia, but the existing EECPs in the Donetsk region as well. The latest SMM weekly report of 24 November informed, for instance, on a man who had not been permitted to travel towards government-controlled areas to attend his daughter's funeral, as he had not obtained permission from the Russian occupation administration. A woman was unable to travel to government-controlled areas with her 12-year-old granddaughter to visit her daughter, the girl's mother. The Russian occupants first assured her that she would be allowed to do so, but then forced her to turn back when they arrived to the line of contact. Such situation cannot continue any longer. We reiterate our call to the Russian side to stop blocking the crossing of the contact line and to allow Ukrainian citizens to meet their relatives, to receive pensions and proper medical treatment, and not to be restricted in moving across their own country.

We also remind the Russian side on its obligation to ensure full and unconditional access of the international organizations including the ICRC to all detained persons. This is a direct provision of the Paris "Normandie" Summit of December 2019. We do not understand why it has not been implemented until now. The Russian side has not even attempted to provide any justifications of this behaviour. According to the data provided by the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine, there are 160 places of illegal detention in the temporarily occupied parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. Those areas are currently looking like one big prison, from which there is no escape, and there is no one you could share your situation to.

We deeply regret that the most recent sessions of the TCG and its Working Groups on 24 and 25 November have been wasted by the Russian side to achieve at least partial progress on those outstanding issues I have just mentioned. The outright obstruction of the practical results of the TCG's work one year since the last N4 Summit in Paris has become even more relentless.

Mr. Chairperson,

Let me draw the attention of participating States to the draft resolution «Situation of human rights in Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine», which was adopted by the UN General Assembly Third Committee on 18 November last

week. Among other provisions, it urges the Russian Federation to ensure the unhindered access of international human rights mechanisms, as well as the OSCE SMM, to the territory of the temporarily occupied Crimea. We thank those participating States, which supported this document in the UN, and call those who have not done this yet, to vote for it at the plenary session of the UN GA in December.

We took note of the statement made by Russian MFA spokesperson on 19 November that many international bodies take their decisions on the situation in Crimea without even visiting it. We call on the Russian side to follow numerous decisions of the international organizations and to allow such visits without undermining Ukraine's sovereignty. We remind that the OSCE SMM is fully entitled to visit Crimea, as it belongs to the Mission's mandate.

We, again, urge the Russian Federation to reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea, militarization of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, and to stop its aggression against Ukraine, including by withdrawing its armed formations, mercenaries and their hardware from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and fully implementing its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.