



**Permanent Mission of Ukraine**  
to the International  
Organizations in Vienna

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

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1304<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council  
4 March 2021

### **Madam Chairperson,**

At the previous meeting of the Permanent Council, Russian Ambassador ended his statement with a threat that, I quote, "possible escalation of violence at the line of contact in Donbas can lead to unpredictable consequences", end of quote. The very next day, on 19 February, the SMM recorded six hundred ceasefire violations, more than usually was the case for the entire week.

Although in the following days the numbers went down, the character of shellings by the Russian armed formations continued to evolve from a provocative one to the deliberate fire, causing further casualties among Ukrainian militaries. In one single day of 26 February, that is last Friday, 11 servicemen were wounded. Three days earlier, a civilian was killed near Zolote-4 as a result of grenade launcher fire and remote planting of a mine. The intensity of shellings does not drop: on 28 February, the Russian militants used 120mm mortars and light weapons, killing another Ukrainian military. Moreover, yesterday, on 3 March, Russian media informed that the armed formations were given permission to deliver so-called "preventive fire", that is to attack first without even seeking the pretext to do that.

We severely condemn Russia's actions aimed at serious aggravation of the security situation in Donbas, and urge the Russian side to stop it. It is not too late to return to the ceasefire regime, which has proved its efficiency since July 2020. Last week, the SMM recorded an average of about 72 ceasefire violations per day, compared to a daily average of 746 in February 2020. There still exists room for maintaining ceasefire along the contact line and moving further to other security provisions of the Minsk agreements.

Ensuring free and safe access of the SMM to the entire conflict zone remains an essential prerequisite to this end. Without it, the Mission is unable to implement fully its monitoring mandate. In the last two weeks, its freedom of movement was restricted on 19 occasions, all of which in the parts of Donbas, temporarily occupied by Russia. The most outrageous incidents took place near Voznesenivka, when two members of the Russian armed formations told the Mission to land its UAV, saying that they could not ensure its integrity, and that they would confiscate all of the SMM's equipment otherwise; near Novoazovsk, when a member of the Russian armed formations told the Mission to leave the settlement and followed it in a vehicle to the checkpoint; and near Olenivka, when the SMM was requested to open the doors and trunks of its vehicles for a visual inspection and had to leave after waiting for nearly five hours. We again call on Russia to undertake its responsibility for providing the SMM possibility to work.

Denial of Russia's role as a party to the conflict remains, regrettably, the major obstacle to peace. The most recent TCG meeting on 2–3 March has again ended inconclusively.

Instead of implementing its commitments, the Russian side continues fuelling the conflict it had initiated seven years ago.

On 15 February, the SMM spotted, for the first time, a target and acquisition radar "51U6 Kasta-2E1", another modern Russian weapon system, which has never been in use of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. A high-quality photo of this system was provided by the SMM in its weekly report of 23 February.

In the last two weeks, the Mission reported 176 weapons in violation of withdrawal lines, 91% of which – in the Russia-occupied areas.

On 25 February, an SMM mini-UAV spotted in a field about 1.7km north of Petrivske a transparent plastic bag filled with about 20 anti-personnel mines (PMN-2), assessed as belonging to the Russian armed formations. Those mines, I would recall again, are banned in Ukraine, but not in Russia.

Along with military escalation, the Russian side refuses to implement the agreed humanitarian measures. Almost four months have passed since the EECs near Zolote and Shchastia had to be opened on 10 November 2020. This whole time, the Russian side, including in the PC meetings, was coming up with more and more pretexts to justify its unwillingness to do its part. We have even heard accusations on the lack of shuttle buses, which would provide transportation between the government-controlled EECs and the respective checkpoints of the Russian armed formations.

Since 24 February, the Ukrainian authorities have provided such buses. Still, no response from the Russian side: the checkpoints remain closed, although both of them are ready, including for transport traffic. On 1 March, the UN humanitarian convoy successfully crossed the contact line through Shchastia EEC towards the occupied Luhansk city, as confirmed in particular by the SMM. Ukrainian citizens in the occupied parts of Donbas are still prevented from receiving convenient services by the Ukrainian government directly at the EECs, where all the necessary infrastructure including bank branches was established. It could be the real goal of the Russian occupation forces not to open the EECs in order to prevent Ukrainian citizens from the opportunity to compare dire conditions in the occupied parts of Donbas with the clear benefits in the government-controlled areas.

The yawning gap between the positions demonstrated by Ukraine and Russia in resolving the conflict is all too apparent to the international community. During his visit to Ukraine this week, President of the European Council Charles Michel stressed, among other things, that Russia hasn't regrettably undertaken positive steps to fulfil the Minsk agreements, like Ukraine did. He has also underlined that the Russian Federation is a party to this conflict, and not a mediator.

We remain grateful to all our partners supporting Ukraine in countering Russia's ongoing aggression, be it political, economic or defense assistance. On 1 March, the US Department of Defense announced a new \$125 million package on training, equipment, and advisory efforts to help Ukraine to more effectively defend itself against Russian aggression. This adds to a wide range of support, which has already been provided by many countries of the world, including those represented in the OSCE. We appreciate it.

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, Madam Chairperson.**