



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

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**Statement in response to Ambassador Gyorgy Varga,
Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission
at two Russian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border**

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1217th meeting of the Permanent Council,
14 February 2019

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of Ukraine warmly welcomes Mr. György Varga, the Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border, back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his written report and today's presentation.

We note that the Mission continues to operate in difficult and restrictive conditions, which make it impossible to deliver comprehensive monitoring at the two BCPs because of significant restrictions on the freedom of movement within the BCPs, that had been imposed by the Russian authorities. We take note with concern of the so called "recommendations" of the host country, that the border observers even do not have the right to interview by-passers, nor to hold conversation with them inside the BCP area.

Although with limited mandate, small size and significant restrictions imposed by the Russian authorities, the Mission continues to provide useful information exposing Russia's support for its armed formations in Donbas. While Russia committed itself to withdraw its military, mercenaries and fighters from Donbas, their illegal flow into Ukraine continues. During the reporting period 367 crossings of people in military-style outfits from Russia into Ukraine and back were observed.

There can no illusions about why the Russian Federation, one country among 57, has been objecting since 2014 to the expansion of the geographic scope of the Mission and to enabling monitoring between the border crossings of the 409 km Ukrainian-Russian state border segment which is for now controlled on both sides by the Russian authorities. Since August until end October 2018 the SMM had observed on seven occasions convoys of trucks, including with military hardware, entering and exiting Ukraine from Russia in the middle of the night via a dirt track where there are no border crossing facilities. On 27 October 2018 the Russian armed formations shot down the SMM long-range UAV as it was spotting another illegal entry of a military convoy into the Ukrainian territory from Russia. The ongoing developments on the ground prove Russia's unchanged intentions to fuel the conflict and hide from the international community Russia's direct role as a party to the conflict in the Donbas

region of Ukraine. Thousands of pieces of weaponry and the modern exclusively Russian military equipment, including the jamming system R-330 “Zhitel” spotted by the SMM again last week in Luhansk, all arrived to the occupied parts of Donbas from the territory of the Russian Federation. This week the SMM spotted a modern Russian radio intelligence system TORN in Novohryhorivka situated in the occupied part of Donbas.

Mr. Chairperson,

Russian citizens acting as foreign terrorist fighters or mercenaries continue to fight against the Ukrainian authorities in the occupied parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine in Russia-instigated conflict. The Russian Government conceals Russian casualties. A fraction of them is revealed by report of the OSCE Observer Mission at two BCPs, in particular recording 18 ambulances and five funeral service vehicles crossing the border in both directions. Among them, on 8 November, at the Gukovo BCP a vehicle was reported (Mercedes Vito van) with so called “LPR” plates which bore the sign “GRUZ 200” and crossed the border from Ukraine into the Russian Federation (“Gruz 200” (Cargo 200) is a well-known military code for transporting “military personnel killed in action”).

The Russian authorities maintain the practice of sending the so-called “humanitarian convoys” in violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. During the reporting period 3 Russian convoys violated Ukraine’s border at the Donetsk BCP, but since 22 August 2014 the OM observed 82 such convoys. Whereas Russia, as the occupying power, bears responsibility for the situation in the occupied parts of Donbas we note with concern Russia’s continuous attempts to hide the real content of the deliveries and dismissal of an international mechanism, envisaged by the Minsk agreements.

Mr. Chairperson,

Russia’s ongoing aggression against Ukraine continues to breach the Minsk agreements as well as the OSCE principles and commitments, in particular regarding sovereignty and territorial integrity, inviolability of frontiers, border security and combating terrorism.

The violence, perpetrated by the Russian armed formations in the Donbas region of Ukraine, underlines the imperative of comprehensive border monitoring in connection with continued flows of military equipment and personnel from Russia in the non-government controlled areas of Donbas. We emphasise the utmost relevance of the Minsk Protocol of 5 September 2014 whereby the signatories committed themselves to ensure permanent monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian border and verification by the OSCE with the creation of security zone in the border regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation. The role of the OSCE in monitoring and verification in the border regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation is thus firmly embedded in the Minsk agreements. This is a very clear commitment, co-signed by Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE, but which has not yet been realized in view of Russia’s opposition.

Ukraine encourages the Chairmanship and the CPC to intensify efforts with the aim of practical implementation of this crucial commitment relating to the border and border security zone with the use of all available OSCE assets and instruments.

In conclusion, we once again thank Ambassador György Varga and his able team for their dedicated work and wish every success in their future activities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.