



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 1256th meeting of the Permanent Council,
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Mr. Chairperson,

We thank you for informing participating States on the most recent visit of Chairperson-in-Office Edi Rama to Ukraine. It has indeed demonstrated Albania's resolve to pay priority attention to the peaceful settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict on the basis of the norms of international law, OSCE principles and commitments. We welcome Chairmanship's focus on alleviating dire humanitarian situation caused by the ongoing hostilities in Donbas. During the meetings of Chairperson-in-Office with Ukraine's leadership, the need to ensure active OSCE engagement in Crimea has also been raised. We appreciate readiness of the Chairmanship to foster further increase of human resources and technical monitoring capacities of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to provide 24/7 observation, including in the night time, when most of ceasefire violations take place. This is critical for ensuring a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire in Donbas. While we understand existing financial constraints, we call on participating States to support this increase.

Just to remind why we advocate any steps aimed at establishment of ceasefire. Last year, attacks by the Russian armed formations left 129 Ukrainian militaries dead and 699 heavily wounded. This year, in less than a month, the toll of Ukrainian military casualties reached 8 killed and 29 wounded (as of 22 January). This occurs despite the arrangements on ceasefire reached in particular by the Normandy Four leaders in the Paris Summit last December.

We do not ask you to send your militaries to the war zone in Donbas, we ask you to provide adequate financing for ensuring the SMM's technical ability to monitor security situation 24/7 and to report on ceasefire violations. Particular attention must be paid to the distant monitoring, primarily with the use of long-range UAVs, in the border areas remaining beyond reach of the SMM ground patrols due to the ongoing restrictions and harassment by the Russian proxies.

The most persistent restrictions remain in place in Russia-occupied part of southern Donetsk region between the state border and the city of Mariupol. The Russian armed formations deny SMM patrols access, citing "orders from superiors", fictional "demining activities" and "armed operations". I would remind the Russian delegation that paragraph 5 of the Minsk Memorandum, which Russia signed as a party to the

conflict, introduced a ban on deployment of heavy weapons and military equipment, not a ban on the SMM, in that area. We strongly urge the Russian side to lift these restrictions and to stop violating its own commitments.

Implementation of other security provisions of the Minsk agreements remains stalled as well. Dozens of the Minsk-proscribed weapons violating the respective withdrawal lines and those outside of the designated storage sites continue to be registered by the SMM, almost all of them in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas. On 16 January, when the SMM patrol was conducting a mini-UAV flight over areas near Shymshynivka, this UAV has been shelled. I would recall that Shymshynivka, a well-known storage site of the Russian heavy weapons, is located nearly 50 km from the contact line, which excludes any possibility of unintentional fire, which occasionally takes place along the contact line. The Russian proxies knew very well, to whom this UAV belonged, and that it was monitoring at that moment their heavy weapons located in the same area.

While the TCG continues its work to define additional disengagement areas, as agreed in the last N4 Summit, the Russian side does not stick to its commitments in the existing areas, in which disengagement has been completed. As we see from the SMM reports, members of the Russian armed formations remain inside the Stanytsia Luhanska disengagement area. Persons in military-style clothing were spotted near the former positions of the Russian armed formations inside the Petrivske disengagement area. The banned anti-personnel mines were reported at the eastern, Russia-controlled, edge of the same disengagement area.

The only issue, in which we witness essential progress in fulfilment of the Minsk agreements and the N4 agreed conclusions, is mutual release and exchange of conflict-related detainees. But even in this case, a lot remains to be done. 76 Ukrainian citizens were released by the Russian side on 29 December 2019. At the same time, almost two hundred more remain in illegal custody in the temporarily occupied parts of Donbas. All of them, as well as Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians kept behind bars in the occupied Crimea and in the territory of the Russian Federation, must be immediately set free. We urge the Russian side to demonstrate necessary political will to let this happen.

We cannot but draw attention that this Tuesday Ukraine commemorated the fallen defenders of the Donetsk International Airport. By its seizure in January 2015 Russian troops violated the agreed disengagement line, envisaged by the Minsk agreements. What was even more notorious, that was the destiny of the Ukrainian servicemen, captured in the Donetsk International Airport. Many were tortured and mistreated, some were killed. We have already drawn attention of the OSCE Permanent Council to the execution style killing in 2015 of Ukrainian serviceman Ihor Branovytskyi, captured in the Donetsk International Airport. The Amnesty International collected video and eyewitness accounts proving this heinous crime. Over these years no one has been brought to justice for this and many other crimes, committed in the occupied parts of Donbas.

We call upon the OSCE executive structures to remain seized of the ongoing violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the occupied Crimea and the most glaring cases of persecution of Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars. The Russian occupation authorities continue carry out so-called “trials” in trumped-up cases. Last Saturday, on 18 January, Ukrainian journalist Taras Ibragimov who had regularly followed these so-called “court proceedings”, was banned from entering Crimea.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.