



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

**Statement in Response to Ambassador Martin Sajdik, Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, and Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine**

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1166<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
30 November 2017

**Mr. Chairperson,**

At the outset I wish to warmly welcome CiO's Special Representative Ambassador Martin Sajdik and SMM Chief Monitor Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan back to the Permanent Council and thank them for their comprehensive reports, the fifth time this year.

As the Delegation of Ukraine underlined during our exchange in January, Russia's aggression against Ukraine and flagrant violation of the core OSCE principles as a key challenge to security require a sustained focus of the OSCE collective efforts. I have to reiterate this position today as the aggression continues unabated. Russia's large-scale efforts are directed not only at breaching Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also at escaping responsibility for its actions by denials and the strategy of "blinding" the SMM. We recognize the importance of the attention, that was paid by the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship to addressing this gravest threat to European security, and encourage the incoming Italian Chairmanship to act likewise with resolve and determination.

**Ambassador Sajdik,**

We note your activities within the Trilateral Contact Group, which includes Ukraine and Russia as parties to the conflict and the OSCE as mediator, to reach progress in implementing the Minsk agreements. We point out to the composition of the TCG every time in our response to your report, as the deliberate omission by the Russian side of "trilateral" in the name of the group is directly linked to attempts of evading responsibility for fulfilling Russia's commitments under the Minsk agreements.

So far Russia has not delivered on its responsibilities and commitments. As stated in the SMM weekly report of 22 November, ceasefire violations increased by about 60 per cent and reached the highest number recorded in a week since mid-

June 2017. The persistent cease-fire violations are carried out by the Russian hybrid forces which are integrated into Russia's military chain of command, use Russia-supplied weapons and ammunition and are paid with Russian rubles. The Mission has also registered the notable increase in the use and presence of the Minsk-proscribed weapons, overwhelming majority of which were observed in the parts of Donbas effectively controlled by Russia - 99 out of 112 weapons in violation of their respective withdrawal lines and 251 out of 265 weapons outside designated storage areas. The SMM monitoring in one single day of 20 November registered the presence of 107 battle tanks in different non-government controlled locations. The SMM particularly notes the weapons that appear to be well-maintained, refurbished and loaded with ammunition. The Russian military command makes every effort to conceal when and where these weapons move, leaving for the SMM to observe respective tracks in the security zone, as well as further intentions of the large invasion force on the Ukrainian territory. The Russian Federation undertook in the Minsk agreements to withdraw its troops, fighters and weaponry from the Ukrainian territory, however the opposite is continuously observed.

Russia's denial of its responsibilities further aggravates the plight of the civilians on the conflict-affected part of Donbas in view of social, economic and ecological consequences of the aggression. As a result, the opening of Zolote crossing point remains blocked, international humanitarian organizations are restricted from operating in non-government controlled areas, security guarantees for repair the damaged essential infrastructure are denied by the Russian hybrid forces, international experts are not allowed to thoroughly and independently assess the scale of serious ecological risks, in particular associated with the flooding of mines. It is essential to seek speedy resolution of these problems in the TCG.

We note the discussions on the release and exchange of all hostages and illegally held persons, based on the principle of "all for all", which took place in the TCG yesterday, 29 November. It is a humanitarian imperative to finalise this process and exchange promptly before the upcoming holiday season.

**Ambassador Apakan,**

We commend the dedicated efforts of the SMM to provide the OSCE participating States with facts on the ground in Donbas, despite significant restrictions and impediments in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. We note from the Chief Monitor's report that in the reporting period the SMM faced almost 90 non-mine related restrictions on freedom of movement, of which all but eight happened in non-government controlled areas, i.e. 92%. The description in the report of a number of specific cases of restrictions points out to their deliberate and systematic nature and gives a good sense of why the report notes that "the Mission's monitoring and verification, as well as its reporting to the international community, were hindered". This is another important area where the Russian Federation has not delivered on its responsibilities and commitments, choosing instead to continue "blinding the SMM". Despite systematic nature of restrictions, regularly reported by the SMM, there has been no action taken by the

Russian officers of the JCCC to remove these restrictions, including in the “areas adjacent to Ukraine’s border outside control of the Government”. We note the “refusal of those in control to provide security guarantees enabling the SMM to open additional forward patrol bases and patrol hubs in the area” as the continuous denial by Russia of transparency at the border and its unwillingness to comply with the Minsk provision on ensuring permanent OSCE monitoring and verification at the border. This position of Russia was again demonstrated in consultations in the OSCE on the respective draft Ministerial decision, submitted by Ukraine, and supported by the OSCE participating States, except one. A week before the Ministerial, we strongly encourage the Russian Federation to review its position on this draft in view of its Minsk commitments, the OSCE norms and principles and the importance of this measure for progress in peaceful resolution. We consistently stressed throughout the year that until effective international monitoring and verification at the border are established, achieving lasting de-escalation will be elusive. We have to emphasise it again.

A matter of particular and deep concern are continuing threats, intimidations and attacks on the SMM monitors and SMM technical assets that regularly happen in the areas of Donbas under effective Russia’s control. The latest - on the morning of 27 November when the SMM, positioned near non-government controlled Dovhe, heard at least 100 shots of small arms fire, assessed them to be “fired from “LPR” positions and aimed at UAV”. We strongly condemn these attacks and intimidation and urge Russia to put an immediate and effective end to them. We remind the Russian Federation that the SMM and its assets belong to all 57 participating States and we expect Russia to stop putting them at risk.

Under the circumstances of significant restrictions to SMM freedom of movement, the technical assets and aerial imagery are increasingly necessary for monitoring and registering the facts on the ground. We encourage the Chairmanship and the SMM to step up the efforts of strengthening the technical capabilities of the mission, including long-range UAVs, additional cameras and acoustic sensors.

A specific part of the SMM mandate is to establish and report facts concerning alleged violations of fundamental OSCE principles and commitments. Such violations happen constantly, among them - illegal military supplies and movement of military personnel across Ukrainian-Russian border to sustain occupation and violence in Donbas; recognition by the Russian Federation of the so called “documents” issued by illegal structures in Donbas; sending of so-called “humanitarian convoys”; introduction of Russian currency and tax legislation; seizure of Ukrainian enterprises and many other Russia’s unilateral steps undermining the implementation of the Minsk agreements and running contrary to the OSCE principles. We expect consistent focus of the SMM on main railway hubs and transport routes, making the respective monitoring findings a separate section in the reports. The findings on the railway hubs, which were observed and reported by the SMM, pointed clearly to their essential role in military supply chains established by the Russian Federation.

While we take note of the Chief Monitor’s report about absence of public gatherings in the non-government controlled areas of Donbas as “freedom of

assembly appears to be denied – or discouraged – by those in control”, we expect the SMM to monitor and report more extensively on the human rights situation in those areas, including access to media and freedom of expression. The Russian Federation which started the conflict bears responsibility for the grave violation of human rights and freedoms in the areas under its effective control.

**Distinguished colleagues,**

As the mandate of the SMM covers the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, we reiterate the need of due monitoring and reporting on the situation in the temporarily occupied Crimean peninsula, where the Russian occupation authorities persist in persecutions and repressions of all opponents of the occupation. We would encourage the SMM to use the good practices of other international organizations, which monitor the human rights in the temporarily occupied Crimea from the presence in mainland Ukraine, given the denial of access to the peninsula by the Russian occupation regime.

The developments, loss of life and destruction in the course of this year prove that sustained international pressure on Russia is required to make it implement the undertaken commitments in full.

Concluding my statement, I wish to once again thank Ambassador Sajdik and Ambassador Apakan, as well as the entire SMM team for their hard and dedicated work of contributing to peaceful resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and upholding the OSCE principles and commitments.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**