



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 1285th meeting of the Permanent Council
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Mr. Chairperson,

The discussions, held at the previous meeting of the Permanent Council and the most recent informal briefing by Ambassador Morel, demonstrated that the deadlock in activities of the TCG remains in place.

Russia continues to blackmail Ukraine, blocking any progress on security, political, and humanitarian tracks. The Kremlin's demands to amend the resolution of the Ukrainian Parliament on local elections, or to hold so called "joint inspections" to check OSCE SMM's findings, duly reported pursuant to its mandate, before any substantive headway can be made, are now supplemented by the sustained effort to drown the TCG work in a multitude of procedural issues. Quite a creative "improvement", isn't it?

Instead of continuing work on practical issues of importance for peaceful settlement of the conflict, the Russian Federation has adopted a habit of regularly dumping on the TCG made-up issues like making audio- and video-recordings of TCG proceedings or changing the long-established practice of CiO Special Representative's summary statements following TCG meetings.

Long hours of TCG's precious time have already been wasted on these absolutely unnecessary discussions. No need to look too far for reasons why all this is being done – the Russian Federation is not interested in decisions and solutions leading to a politico-diplomatic resolution of this armed conflict, it is actually the party interested in continuing it.

The most recent Russian invention to wreck the TCG work and delay decisions is the proposal to task the Political Working Group with drafting a roadmap to settle the conflict. Let me clearly state in this connection that Ukraine is fully committed to fulfilling the decision of the 2016 Berlin summit of the leaders of Ukraine, France, Germany and Russia (19.10.2016) "to develop a mutually acceptable roadmap for the implementation of the Minsk agreements". Much work has already been done by the political advisers of the N4 leaders on this track, and it should be continued.

We see the Russian proposal as an attempt to muddle the waters and undercut the previous efforts in the “Normandie format”.

In the TCG, what is indeed required is implementation and hard work. There are plenty of issues and documents to apply the parties’ best efforts. The only thing lacking is political will. And not on our side.

We, together with other delegations, urge the Russian side to stop this practice and resume constructive consultations within the TCG. With the winter season approaching, we cannot waste time on trying to accommodate Russia’s political wishes, when local residents are waiting for demining of critical infrastructure, establishment of new disengagement areas, when PoWs and other conflict related detainees are longing for release.

The ceasefire, established along the contact line since 27 July, remains a remarkable achievement. It remains in place due to restraint, demonstrated by the Ukrainian servicemen, who do not deliver response fire to daily provocations by the Russian armed formations.

I regret to say that in the recent days, the number of such provocations has grown: on 10 October there was one case, next day – four, and on 12 October – already seven.

In the last two weeks, the SMM recorded 94 Russian heavy weapons in violation of their withdrawal lines and 349 of them outside designated storage sites. We thank the SMM for these findings, which indicate Russia’s readiness to escalate sharply the security situation in Donbas whenever such decision is taken in Moscow. We urge the Russian Federation to abandon its plans and to proceed instead with finalizing security arrangements already agreed within the TCG Working Groups. Let me remind: Head of the delegation of Ukraine President Leonid Kravchuk has already initialled the agreed text. Where is Russia’s signature?

Among other participating States, we reiterate again and again our call on the Russian side to stop restricting activities of the SMM. The Mission’s de-facto division into three entities severely undermines its monitoring capacities. This is also a direct violation of the Paris N4 Agreed Conclusions, in which all four participants, including Russia, recalled that SMM, I quote, “should be able to use all possibilities of the 21 March 2014 mandate, and have safe and secure access throughout Ukraine in order to fully implement its mandate”. On the one hand, the Russian delegation is trying to blame Ukraine in this hall for non-implementation of the Minsk agreements and the N4 arrangements. On the other hand, it is the Russian side which blocks progress in the TCG and defies the N4 decisions. Again, this destructive, openly contemptuous behaviour must be stopped.

Let me briefly touch upon the situation at the entry-exit checkpoints, which was raised by many delegations in the previous meetings of the Permanent Council. The Russian delegation, while trying to justify steps undertaken by the Russian occupation authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk at the line of contact, stated that the checkpoints regime was, I quote, “brought by inhumane socio-economic and transport blockade of Donbas, established de-facto in 2014 and de-jure in 2017”, end of quote. Let me remind the Russian Ambassador that the line of contact emerged in Donbas in 2014 following the armed attack by the Russian special operations forces and then regular military units and servicemen “on leave” (as usual, all shamefully

without insignia), who occupied parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. The entry-exit checkpoints were established to ensure free and safe passage across the front line for civilians, who would otherwise risk their lives while crossing it under the Russian bullets.

Even in the times of COVID-19 pandemic, Ukrainian authorities do their best to provide passage to civilians to the extent the epidemiologic situation permits. We were keeping EECPs open not only in Luhansk, but in the Donetsk region as well, and refrained from imposing excessive demands such as prior registration according to some lists, which was introduced by the occupation authorities. Having in mind the rapid spread of COVID-19 in the occupied parts of Luhansk region, starting from today, 15 October, the EECF in Stanytsia Luhanska will be temporarily closed until the end of this month. As was the case in the past, those civilians who will be able to prove the critical need of crossing the contact line, will be allowed to pass based on the socio-humanitarian criteria. The SMM patrols will continue to face no restrictions, in line with Ukraine's commitments.

Mr. Chairperson,

We are grateful to all delegations paying proper attention in this hall to the issue of the temporarily occupied Crimea. While in dealing with the conflict taking place in Donbas the OSCE is well represented by the SMM and the TCG, the same cannot be said about Crimea, to which the Russian occupation authorities continue to deny access of any international monitoring mechanisms.

In this context, let me draw the attention of participating States to the third Report by the UN Secretary General "Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine", released on 8 October. It provides a long list of Russia's violations of its obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law in Crimea, such as tortures, arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances, violations of fundamental freedoms of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly, association, thought, conscience and religion.

Conscription of protected persons residing in Crimea into the armed forces of the Russian Federation is a painful and most serious problem, which was many times raised in the OSCE PC meetings. The UN SG, again, called on Russia to put a stop to this practice. Yesterday, on 14 October, more than 500 so-called "recruits" were sent from the occupied city of Sevastopol to join the Black Sea Navy and the military units of the Russian Southern military district, which are directly involved in the hostilities and armed aggression against Ukraine. Those five hundred youngsters have been added up to nearly 25.000 persons, illegally conscripted by Russia since the beginning of Crimea's occupation. We urge participating States to publicly condemn this ongoing flagrant violation by Russia of the norms of international law.

Public statements and positions are important to let aggressor State know that its actions are not forgotten and will face adequate response. In this context, we thank the European Union and its Member States for clear messages of support to Ukraine and restoration of its sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, expressed in the Joint statement following the 22nd EU-Ukraine

Summit, held in Brussels on 6 October. We are also grateful to all our partners regularly raising this issue in this hall.

Finally, let me inform you that Ukraine proposes a new consultation and coordination format – the Crimean Platform – to increase effectiveness of the international response to the ongoing occupation of Crimea. Some of you are already aware of this initiative, aimed at gathering under its umbrella all the thematic events and initiatives on the Crimean issue within international organizations including the OSCE, other international governmental and non-governmental fora. We will provide more details on it in due course.

We hope that participating States contribute to our efforts within this platform, including during the forthcoming Ministerial Council in Tirana.

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, militants and their hardware from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and fully implementing its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.