

**Statement of Ukraine at the special session of the OSCE Annual Security Review Conference “Ensuring security and stability in the OSCE region in light of developments with respect to Ukraine”**

As delivered by the delegation of Ukraine  
23 June 2020

**Mr. Chairperson,  
Distinguished participants,**

I wish to start by thanking the Albanian Chairmanship for organizing this Conference, the key event in the politico-military dimension of the OSCE. It was a challenge indeed to accommodate the needs and concerns of participating States, especially at a time of coronavirus pandemic with its restrictions on travel and physical presence. Particular gratitude goes for keeping in place the practice of holding a special session dedicated to the Russia-Ukraine conflict and its impact on security and stability in the OSCE region.

Let me also take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the thoughtful and forward-looking statement of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office – we share his realistic assessment of the security situation on the continent and his call for action, solidarity and responsibility amid growing tensions.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict lasts already for more than six years, longer than the Second World War, the most devastating military clash in the human history. Russia has not learned the lessons of WWII; in 2008, it attacked Georgia and, in 2014, resorted to an illegal attempt to annex a part of the territory of its neighbour, Ukraine. It launched a military invasion into Crimea and Donbas, and initiated a massive propaganda war against my country, aimed to justify this invasion and avoid responsibility. For more than 6 years, millions of people continue to live under Russia’s temporary occupation in Crimea and in several districts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. Hostilities along the contact line in Donbas continue, bringing new casualties, economic losses and ruined lives. Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians are persecuted in Crimea for expressing disagreement with Russia’s occupation and exercising the fundamental freedom of religion or belief. De facto, deportations of Ukrainian citizens from Crimea as well as transfers of the Russian population into the Crimean peninsula have been part and parcel of that strategy. Russia strengthens its military presence in Donbas and continues to transform the Crimean peninsula and the surrounding waters into its military outpost in the Black and Azov seas. Such de-stabilizing actions represent an increasing threat to security and trade well beyond the OSCE region.

All of this represents a number of grave security challenges, not only for Ukraine, but for the region and the entire OSCE community as well. This Organization was built on mutually agreed core principles and commitments. When the rules of the game are broken by one participant, chaos begins. A chaos, which will not bring benefits to anyone. Russia’s persistent violations of the most basic norms of international law must not become a new normal for Europe. If tolerated, they will only lead to further deterioration of security and serve as an excuse for the aggressor State to continue its policy.

As this is a security review conference, let me highlight some of the most significant developments related to the Russia-Ukraine armed conflict, which took place in the previous months. The presidential and parliamentary elections, held in Ukraine last year, opened a window of opportunity for Ukraine and Russia to accelerate negotiations on a peaceful politico-diplomatic resolution, which is long overdue. We thank the OSCE for facilitating the efforts in this direction within the Trilateral Contact Group, as well as Germany and France within the Normandy Four format. As you are well aware, Mr. Chairperson, Ukraine took a number of steps to this end over the past few months:

- ✓ agreed on a text of the so-called “Steinmeier formula”;
- ✓ ensured an extension of the “Law on the special order of the local self-government in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions” for another year, till 31 December 2020;
- ✓ agreed to finalize disengagement of forces and hardware in three pilot areas, despite Russia’s continued violations of its own commitments in this field;
- ✓ initiated a 24/7 format of consultations within the TCG during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- ✓ increased the level of Ukrainian delegation by including top officials of the Government and heads of parliamentary committees;
- ✓ most recently, included prominent representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the Ukrainian delegation.

These steps, although well received and noted by the international community, were not reciprocated by the Russian side. Illegal occupation of Crimea and parts of Donbas continues. Russia keeps issuing hundreds of thousands of its passports to Ukrainian citizens living in the occupied areas of Ukraine, flagrantly breaching Ukraine’s sovereignty and undermining the prospects of future reintegration. We condemn Russia’s intentions to engage holders of illegally issued Russian passports in voting at the Russian constitutional referendum as another destructive and illegitimate step. Along with its detrimental impact on the peace process, it will also cast serious doubts on the voting results.

In fact, we have seen no signs so far that the Kremlin has taken a decision to finally end the conflict and withdraw its Armed Forces, mercenaries and other illegal armed formations from the occupied areas of Ukraine. Instead, it continues sending military convoys across the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border and fuelling violence in Donbas, persecuting Ukrainian citizens in Crimea and the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and leading hybrid warfare against the Ukrainian state and society, legitimate bodies of power, the rule of law and democracy in Ukraine.

For more than six years already, Russia has been hiding behind its proxies and urging Ukraine to start a so-called “direct dialogue” with Kremlin’s occupation administrations in Donbas. This does not work. Russia’s attempts to persuade the international community that there are no Russian troops, weapons or mercenaries in Ukraine, will not deceive anyone. The facts, established and reported by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, speak for themselves. The reports issued by international organizations, including by the UN Secretary General and the UNESCO Director-General, as well as numerous findings

by the NGOs, leave no doubt regarding the dire situation of Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians in the occupied Crimea.

It is high time for Russia to cease the policy, which does not work, and demonstrate constructive engagement into the negotiations on ending the conflict and occupation. As reiterated by the Ukrainian side many times, there can be no compromises on Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence within its internationally recognized borders. Those are red lines, which cannot be crossed. Until this objective is reached, the OSCE area will remain vulnerable and fragile in the face of conflicts aimed at redrawing the existing borders in Europe through calling up the ghosts of historic past.

We believe that the proposed amendments to the constitution of the Russian Federation is a futile endeavour to legitimize the attempted annexation of Crimea, which remains an integral part of Ukraine under international law. If implemented, it will also lead to increased persecution of all those who dare to support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Chairperson, the modern security architecture continues to be the best preventive tool of peace and stability on the European continent. We have heard already Russia's claims that the ongoing coronavirus pandemic could serve as a pretext for obliterating this architecture and building a new one. This would be a return to interests-based international relations, where no one will feel safe and secure.

Let me take this opportunity, Mr. Chairperson, to underscore the OSCE's unique concept of comprehensive security. Security is not only about cessation of fire, absence of damage to civilian infrastructure and unacceptability of human casualties. It is also about the freedom to live as you prefer, to express your views, to exercise your religion, not to be detained under false accusations, to speak your language, to elect your representatives to public offices, to have your families and homes safe. The OSCE, with all its assets, field missions, executive structures and institutions, provides a powerful platform to face these challenges. The comprehensive character of this Organization is its greatest strength, which we all should value and support.

Ukraine appreciates the role played by the OSCE since the beginning of Russia's aggression.

- ✓ 1. Mediation efforts by the OSCE greatly facilitate tense and complicated negotiations held between Ukraine and Russia within the TCG.
- ✓ 2. The OSCE SMM remains the only meaningful international presence on the ground in the occupied parts of Donbas, our ears and eyes, and our tool for establishing truth about Russia's role there. Any restrictions on the freedom of movement of SMM monitors as well as deliberate targeting of its assets are unacceptable and must stop.
- ✓ 3. The OSCE Border Observer Mission at two Russian checkpoints contributes to transparency at the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian border. We will continue demanding more transparency at the border, as part of Russia's own commitments under the Minsk Protocol, and as a key element for reducing hostilities on the ground.

- ✓ 4. We should also not forget about the role, which will be taken by the OSCE ODIHR related to local elections in Donbas to be held in accordance with relevant OSCE standards and Ukrainian legislation.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Grau and Ambassador Çevik for their tireless work in Ukraine.

We thank the OSCE participating States for providing political, financial and technical support to the OSCE structures working for a peaceful resolution of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Let me stress: such resolution is possible only when the Ukrainian government restores control of all temporarily occupied parts of Ukraine, both Donbas and Crimea. Consensus-based character of the OSCE and Russia's denial of its role as occupying Power and aggressor State in the Crimean peninsula cannot serve as an excuse to turn a blind eye to Ukraine's Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol. We urge the OSCE, the participating States, the OSCE Secretariat and the Conflict Prevention Centre, to examine possible ways to significantly strengthen the OSCE engagement with respect to Crimea. This would demonstrate OSCE real added value as the world's largest regional security organization.

I thank for your attention and wish all participants a successful conference.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**