



**Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine
at the 791st FSC Plenary Meeting
(3 June 2015 at 10.00, Hofburg)**

Madam Chair,

A week since the last meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation did not bring positive changes in the situation on the occupied territories of Ukraine. We continued to register numerous violations of the Minsk agreements by the combined Russian-separatist forces. There were no improvements as the Russian Federation had not yet demonstrated willingness and readiness to reverse its military aggression against Ukraine. It is of our deep concern that the illegal armed groups continued to increasingly use heavy weapons, including larger calibre artillery and MRLSs that must have been withdrawn in compliance with the Minsk agreements.

Ukraine continues to seek a political solution of the conflict in Donbas and remains committed to full and good-faith implementation of the Minsk agreements as the agreed basis for peaceful resolution. My country has shown consistency in implementation since the signing of the Minsk agreements of September 2014 and the Package of measures of 12 February 2015.

Unfortunately, the immediate first steps, stipulated by the Minsk Package, notably the comprehensive ceasefire, withdrawal of heavy weapons under OSCE monitoring and verification, release of hostages remain unimplemented by Russia and its proxies. And these agreed provisions are crucial for placing the de-escalation process on a sustainable basis.

Ceasefire violations by the illegal armed groups are registered on a daily basis with a number of casualties among the Ukrainian servicemen and civilians continuing to grow. In the period from 28 May till 2 June pro-Russian militants in Donbas shelled positions of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and civilian areas across the contact line **379 times** using MLRS Grad, bombardment artillery, mortars, antitank missile system, mounted grenade launcher and small arms as well as tanks and armoured vehicles against Ukraine's ATO Forces. As a result, **11 Ukrainian servicemen were killed, 51 – wounded.**

The capture of two Russian military personnel in Shchastya, on the Ukrainian-controlled side of the ceasefire line, serves as additional evidence that the Russian military and the illegal armed groups are working together, training together, and operating under the joint command and control systems. The militants also continue to be procured with weapons and ammunition from Russia.

The SMM continues to provide reporting that demonstrates the failure of Russia and the militants it backs to comply with the commitments they made in Minsk. While Russia claims to abide by the Minsk agreements, the SMM continues to observe ceasefire violations, the presence of heavy weapons, and to experience access restrictions imposed by Russia-backed armed groups.

We find deeply worrying the continued build-up of forces and heavy weapons on the militants' side of the contact line, as reported by the SMM, and their attempts to redeploy heavy weapons within the exclusion zone for alleged training. Moreover, the pro-Russian militants in Donbas used the ceasefire to regroup their forces and took new positions in order to rearm and prepare for a new offensive. Such actions of the illegal armed groups constitute a serious violation of the Minsk agreements.

Distinguished colleagues,

According to the competent authorities of Ukraine the Russian Federation continues to accumulate heavy weapons on its border with Ukraine. This arsenal includes a large amount of multiple launcher rocket systems, battle tanks and heavy artillery - those types of weapons that are used by the combined Russian-separatist forces in the conflict in Donbas. It is a common practice that the license plates and markings are removed from the Russian weaponry. Many Russian soldiers also remove the military insignia from their camouflage.

Presently, the number of military equipment in the Kuz'minki military training ground in Rostov oblast is three times more than it was in March of this year. A significant part of a road that goes through the steppe from the Kuz'minski military base to the Russian-Ukrainian state border was recently renovated, making it more passable for heavy vehicles. Ukraine is deeply concerned with such concentration of the Russian troops in the vicinity of its eastern borders.

Madam Chair,

Despite consistent calls from Ukraine and its international partners, the Russian Federation remains in breach of its commitments pursuant to a number of OSCE instruments in politico-military dimension; no meaningful steps have been made by the Russian side to enable de-escalation and peaceful resolution of the situation in the east of Ukraine.

One of the striking evidence of violations of fundamental OSCE principles is the fact that from April till June 2015 Ukraine's ATO Forces along with the State Border Service of Ukraine have observed 348 Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) used by the Russian Armed Forces and Russia-backed terrorists for conducting reconnaissance of Ukraine's positions. We have stated at the previous FSC Meeting that one of such reconnaissance UAV was shot down on 20 May near the settlement of Pisky and fell north to the village of Vodyane. The downed UAV "Forpost", produced for the Russian Armed Forces, was built in 2013 at the Ural plant of civil aviation in the Russian Federation. These UAVs, which were produced in a limited number, are used exclusively by the Russian military.

In this connection we drew attention of the Forum to the notification format of Ukraine under the Vienna Document circulated on 26 May 2015 №CBM/UA/15/0048/F10/O. The Ukrainian document provided numerous facts of documented violations by the Russian Federation of the international law and the national legislation of Ukraine relating to the airspace of a sovereign state during an active fulfilment of the military reconnaissance on the territory of Ukraine by Russia in May 2015. It runs against Russia's commitments in the OSCE that in its reply on 28 May 2015 №CBM/RU/15/0066/F41/O the Russian Federation again refused to provide substantive response to the grounded concerns of the Ukrainian side.

We call on the Russian Federation to contribute to restoring security, trust and confidence in the OSCE region by implementing in good faith the relevant OSCE politico-military instruments. We urge Russia to immediately halt its violations of the airspace of Ukraine and guarantee no repetition of the above-mentioned unlawful activities.

Distinguished colleagues,

On 28 May 2015 Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree stipulating that all military deaths will be classified as state secrets not just in times of war but also in peace – a move that will further hinder the reporting on Russian soldiers' casualties in eastern Ukraine.

The Russian president has amended a decree to extend the list of state secrets to include information on casualties during special operations when war has not been declared, among other changes. Previously, the list had only forbidden “revealing personnel losses in wartime”. Revealing state secrets is punishable by up to seven years in prison.

Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists that the changes were not connected to the conflict in Ukraine.

Sergei Krivenko, a member of the Russia’s presidential human rights council, said the decree “raises many questions” and could serve to intimidate activists, journalists or relatives who report the deaths of Russian soldiers in eastern Ukraine. “If we lived in a state governed by the rule of law, this decree would only affect officials”, - he said. “But in the situation we’re in now ... almost any citizen can be punished for revealing information, so long as the authorities decide that this information hurts the country’s interests.”

According to a list of names compiled by Open Russia, an organisation started by Mikhail Khodorkovsky, at least **276 Russian soldiers have been killed in the conflict in eastern Ukraine.**

According to the Russian activist Ilya Yashin, while working on the Nemtsov report he had met relatives of 17 soldiers from Ivanovo who were killed in Ukraine, but they had signed a pledge of secrecy and were afraid to go on record.

The purpose of this decree is obvious – to silence journalists, activists and NGOs, who investigate the losses of the Russian army in the Ukrainian conflict. It is yet another attempt to cover up Russia’s direct involvement in the conflict in Donbas.

Madam Chair,

The Minsk agreements remain the best opportunity to achieve peace in eastern Ukraine, but they will not succeed if the signatories do not deliver by practical steps, not words, on their commitments. The present situation shows that unwillingness of the Russian Federation and the Russia-backed illegal armed groups to abide by their commitments impedes the implementation of the Minsk agreements and the entire peace process.

Full adherence to the Minsk agreements requires a genuine ceasefire. Full adherence to the Minsk agreements also requires Russia and the separatists to fully withdraw heavy weapons, to allow the SMM unfettered access to all areas under militants’ control, including along Ukraine’s international border with Russia, to stop sending fighters and equipment into Ukraine, and to release all hostages, including those held in Russia.

We therefore once again call for the immediate withdrawal of all Russian armed formations, military equipment, as well as mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine under OSCE monitoring. We urge Russia to halt aggressive actions against my country, cease support to the illegal armed groups and reverse annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

Thank you, Madam Chair.