



**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 Nataliia Kostenko, Acting  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1329<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council  
12 August 2021

**Madam Chairperson,**

The Russian occupation forces on the temporarily occupied territories in Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine continue to disregard blatantly the agreement reached at the meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group on 22 July 2020 regarding additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire.

According to information, provided by the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, in the second half of 2020 positions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine along the contact line were shelled by the Russian armed formations with different types of weapons 797 times, whereas in the first half of this year the relevant figure increased almost twice – up to 1319.

A spike in ceasefire violations, which started in April 2021, unfortunately persists till now. According to the SMM's daily reports, only between the evenings of 6 and 8 August, the Mission recorded 168 ceasefire violations in Donetsk region comparing to 96 in the previous reporting period. In Luhansk region, the SMM recorded 283 ceasefire violations, comparing to 138 in the previous reporting period.

On a daily basis, the Headquarters of the Joint Forces Operation reports on different locations and positions, which were fired at by the Russian armed formations. It is worth noting that intensity of fire and shelling by the Russian occupation forces with the use of weapons that should have been withdrawn according to the Minsk agreements, constantly increases. In the first quarter of 2021, the Armed Forces of Ukraine recorded 328 rounds of prohibited calibres, fired at positions of the Joint Forces Operation. In the second quarter, that number rose to 2392.

All ceasefire violations continue being the main reason for new casualties and damages to civilian infrastructure, adding new tragic pages to the history of the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

On 05 August, as a result of shelling of Krasnohorivka village by the Russian armed formations, one civilian was heavily wounded, a five-storeyed residential building and a civilian vehicle were severely damaged.

On the same day, the vicinity of the village of Halytsynivka in government-controlled area was shelled from Russian positions in temporarily occupied Staromykhailivka with the use of the Minsk-proscribed 122mm calibre artillery systems. Luckily, 20 artillery rounds, shot in this direction, targeted agriculture fields and unsurfaced road with no casualties.

On 7 August, the Russian mercenaries employed antitank missile complexes to fire at the positions of the Ukrainian defenders in direction of the Pisky village. As a result of this attack, one Ukrainian serviceman was killed and one injured. One missile was fired at a crane truck, which was providing assistance to local population in restoring damaged civilian infrastructure in this village. The truck was totally destroyed.

On 10 August, three Ukrainian servicemen were injured near Maryinka as a result of shelling by the Russian armed formations. Unfortunately, one of them died later in the hospital.

Just yesterday, on 11 August, the Russian occupation forces shelled civil infrastructure of the village Novoselivka Druga, using 122mm artillery systems, prohibited by the Minsk agreements. One local citizen was killed. A number of private households were damaged. The 86-year old civilian, who was killed, survived through the World War II and was killed in Ukraine by the Russian occupation forces. That is an unspeakable tragedy.

So, these are the outcomes of only one week out of more than 7 years of horror brought to Ukraine by the aggressor state - Russia. Russia, which, trying to manipulate the issue of victims among civil population and damages to civil infrastructure, has already killed thousands of Ukrainians and continues to raise the death toll of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

All these happens in conditions of ongoing restrictions and impediments to the SMM's monitoring activities on the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, especially in the areas adjacent to the segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border, which is temporarily not under control of the Government of Ukraine.

The SMM continues to experience significant difficulties in using its UAV fleet due to multiple instances of GPS signal interference, assessed as caused by probable jamming.

In its weekly report the Mission informs, that near the non-government-controlled Lebiazhe, an SMM mini-UAV spotted a person in military-type clothing, assessed as a member of the armed formations aiming a rifle at the UAV. On the same day, small-arms-fire was assessed as directed at an SMM mini-UAV in the area.

The Headquarters of the Joint Forces Operation reports almost on a daily basis of the Russian UAVs "Orlan-10", conducting flights and crossing the contact line without any difficulties and GPS interference.

Ukraine has always supported activities of the SMM, especially the use of UAVs and other technical equipment which could strengthen the monitoring activities of the Mission on the temporarily occupied territories in Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, where the SMM faces numerous threats and challenges. I think it is obvious, that it is the Russian side which benefits from the current situation using it for unimpeded supply of weapons, military equipment, ammunition, regular troops and mercenaries to the temporarily occupied parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

The Russian aggression became the reason for unprecedented large-scale mine contamination of the Ukrainian territory in the conflict affected area. Only last week the Ukrainian pyrotechnic units inspected more than 36 hectares of territories and disposed of

691 pieces of unexploded ordnance. Meanwhile, Russia continues to block any progress in the TCG on demining issues, thus maintaining conditions for growing number of casualties among civil population, caused by mines, unexploded ordnance and other explosive objects.

I would also like to come back again to the issue of the Russian passports, hundreds of thousands of which are illegally being issued to the residents of the temporarily occupied territories. This is not just a flagrant violation by the Russian Federation of the Minsk agreements and the Ukrainian sovereignty over these territories. This situation can be used by Russia as “casus belli” for wider military aggression against Ukraine any time. Russian highest officials have been speaking of this openly for quite a long time already. This issue is highly relevant just prior to the military exercises “Zapad-2021”, which Russia and Belarus will begin in September 2021.

### **Madam Chairperson,**

Every year on 9 August, we mark the International Day of Indigenous Peoples. This year, Ukraine made an important step to ensure maximum protection of rights of indigenous peoples, as the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the law “On Indigenous Peoples of Ukraine”.

As underlined in the relevant statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, excessive and manipulative reaction by the Russian Federation on this Ukrainian law is indicative and proves that readiness of Ukraine to protect rights of indigenous Crimean Tatar people ruins narratives of the Russian propaganda about alleged belonging of the temporarily occupied Crimea to the Russian Federation.

Unfortunately, this is indigenous people of Crimean Tatars, which suffer the most in the Russia-occupied Crimea from massive persecutions, illegal detentions, groundless charges, etc. At the Permanent Council meeting on 29 July 2021 we provided relevant data, gathered by the “Crimean Tatar Resource Centre” NGO on the issue.

In this regard, I would like to stress, that Ukraine is ready to and will protect its indigenous peoples. Consolidation of international pressure on the aggressor-state to prevent massive human rights violations on the territory of temporarily occupied Crimea is pivotal in this regard. This issue will be among priority topics on the agenda of the Crimea Platform, an inaugural summit of which will be held in Kyiv on 23 August.

On 6 August, Kyiv launched the Crimea Platform Expert Network, which is an important component of this initiative. 180 experts and scholars from 33 countries have already expressed their willingness to join the Network. This is the largest global network of intellectuals in the history of Ukraine, united to find solutions to the problems caused by the Russian temporary occupation of Crimea.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to reiterate our invitation to the OSCE participating States to take part in the work of the Crimea Platform. Its comprehensive structure includes governmental, parliamentary and expert dimensions, and will allow participants to join its activities in a variety of formats.

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

**Thank you, Madam Chairperson.**