



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 1260th meeting of the Permanent Council,
27 February 2020

Mr. Chairperson,

The SMM reports confirm a truly bleak picture of the security situation in Donbas, caused by Russia's ongoing armed attacks, including with the use of heavy artillery, proscribed by the Minsk agreements.

Following the recent artillery attack and infantry assault on Ukrainian positions near Novotoshkivske and Zholobok, close to Zolote disengagement area, in the early hours of 18 February, on which we informed in detail at the last FSC meeting, the SMM confirmed, based on the data, collected by from its long-range UAV, 71 fresh craters near positions of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. All of them were caused, as underlined by the SMM, by impacts of large calibre ammunition, 152 and 120mm. Three days later, on 21 February, the SMM registered in its daily report the results of shelling of the Ukrainian military positions near Popasna, again including with the use of 152mm artillery. The Russian armed formations didn't stop. On 22 February, they again tried to breach the contact line near Novotoshkivske. The attack was repelled and the Russian proxies retreated, leaving one of the fighters dead on the battlefield.

As we have reiterated many times in the past meetings of the Permanent Council, such a high level of violence along the contact line would be impossible for the Russian side to sustain, if it didn't have full control over more than 400km segment of the border. Let me provide several examples. Armoured combat vehicles and trucks heading west and east of the border crossing point near Novoazovsk. Covered cargo trucks and fuel tankers queueing to exit Ukraine at a border crossing point near Uspenka. A train with empty wagons at a station in Lysyche about 6km from the international border. A train and forty railway wagons at the Chervona Mohyla railway station near Voznesenivka moving east towards the border 4.5km away. Fresh vehicle tracks in the snow on an asphalted road near Kuznetsy leading towards the border with the Russian Federation, where there are no border crossing facilities. Those are only some of the facts gathered and established by the SMM in

the last two weeks, which indicate a scale of Russia's illegal crossings of the border with Ukraine.

It is easy to understand why the Russian side is so categorical in its unwillingness to return control over the border to the Government of Ukraine. If done, this will prevent Russian heavy weapons and warfare systems to enter Ukraine. I wish to draw your particular attention to the recent finding of the SMM on three electronic warfare systems (one R-330Zh Zhitel, one R-934B Sinitsa and one RB-636 Svet-KU) and an active radar system (1RL134, Danube) near Russia-occupied Verbova Balka. The use of such systems with the aim to jam SMM UAVs, combined with intimidation of the monitors to prevent them from launching mini-UAVs, remains an essential element of Russia's ongoing efforts to hinder activities of the SMM in the occupied parts of Donbas. Last week's weekly report informed on 23 active restrictions of the SMM's freedom of movement, all of them in Russia-occupied areas. As emphasized by the SMM, since the beginning of the year, it has experienced, I quote, "restrictions of its freedom of movement on 169 occasions, including 163 times in non-government-controlled areas".

We appreciate SMM's efforts to continue monitoring despite these heavy restrictions enacted by the Russian occupation authorities in Donbas. One of the examples of valuable information provided by the Mission is the unacceptable practice of illegal "fines" imposed by the Russian proxies on Ukrainian citizens keeping Ukrainian licence plates on their vehicles in the occupied parts of Donbas. This represents another violation of Ukraine's sovereignty by Russia as an occupying Power. We call on participating States to condemn this practice and urge the Russian Federation to drop it, as well as to reverse all other steps undermining Ukraine's sovereignty.

I wish to conclude by drawing your attention to the most recent ruling by an arbitral tribunal constituted under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea in Ukraine's case against the Russian Federation. As it relates to the topics we regularly discuss in the meetings of the Permanent Council, let me quote some elements of the respective comment given by the MFA of Ukraine.

The Tribunal rejected Russia's position that it lacks jurisdiction over Ukraine's case and determined that it would hear significant aspects of Ukraine's claims, including those related to Russia's violations of UNCLOS in the Kerch Strait and Sea of Azov. Since 2014, Russia has excluded Ukraine from its own maritime areas and exploited Ukraine's natural resources, including fisheries and vast oil and gas reserves. Russia has also disregarded environmental protections and harmed international navigation, including by illegally building the Kerch Bridge, harassing international shipping, and seizing Ukrainian jack-up drilling rigs. As a result of ruling, Ukraine will present its case on the merits before the law of the sea Tribunal.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.