



**Permanent Mission of Ukraine**  
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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ENGLISH only

**Statement on “Russia’s on-going aggression against Ukraine  
and illegal occupation of Crimea”**

As delivered by the Delegation of Ukraine  
to the 1099<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
5 May 2016

**Mr. Chairman,**

The Delegation of Ukraine notes that the number of ceasefire violations in Donbas has slightly decreased over the holiday weekend. We regret, however, that the combined Russian-separatist forces failed to fully comply with the last week’s statement of the Trilateral Contact group meeting on full and comprehensive ceasefire to come into effect from 30 April. Their armed provocations were registered on a daily basis, including on the Orthodox Easter Sunday.

The Russia-backed militants maintain their usual tactics of provocative shellings, sniper fire and attacks of the subversive groups along different sections of the contact line, although of lesser intensity. The heavy weapons, mostly mortars, continued to be used by the illegal armed formations. These provocations raised the toll of casualties. Just over two days prior to the Easter Sunday 3 Ukrainian servicemen were killed and 11 were wounded.

We are concerned over the information about the on-going concentration by the combined Russian-separatist forces of the heavy weapons under the pretext of preparation for “military parades” on the Victory Day of 9 May. We share the SMM’s assessment of the provocative nature of such actions, carried out in the security zone in violation of the Minsk Package of measures. As the Mission rightly pointed out in its weekly report of 27 April, the Minsk agreements foresee no exceptions allowing the return of such weapons to the security zone with or without ammunition.

Our concerns are aggravated by the available information about hostile plans of the pro-Russian militants and possible escalation ahead of the Victory Day. We strongly urge Russia to refrain from any provocation of instigating negative developments, which would further undermine the already fragile security situation on the ground.

We consider it unacceptable that the SMM continues to experience problems with its freedom of movement and access in the occupied areas of Donbas. The past week was again marked by a number of incidents, when the SMM monitoring and verification activities were restricted by the Russia-backed militants. As the Mission reported the

militants “continued to restrict the SMM’s freedom of movement by denying access to certain areas or imposing conditions on the SMM”.

Regular denials of SMM’s access to the Ukrainian-Russian border and adjacent areas are a clear indicator of continuing flow of supplies to the illegal armed formations from the Russian Federation, which Moscow attempts to conceal. We reiterate in this regard that ensuring full and unhindered OSCE border monitoring and resuming border control by the Ukrainian authorities remains indispensable. We consider that implementation of the Minsk provision on establishing a security zone in border areas of both Russia and Ukraine would serve the goal of peaceful resolution and call on Russia to take practical steps to this end. We also reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to abide by its commitments on SMM’s unfettered access and full freedom of movement.

Mr.Chairman,

The Ukrainian authorities continue their efforts aimed at improving the humanitarian situation on the ground. Since 30 April the entry-exit checkpoint “Stanytsya Luhanska” has been re-opened for the May holiday season. We regret that unwillingness of the illegal armed formations to open another entry-exit checkpoint in Luhansk oblast – in Zolote – remains a serious complicating factor for thousands of local residents, needing to cross the contact line.

We view as unacceptable that no progress has been made on lifting the restrictions on operation of international humanitarian organizations in the occupied part of Donbas or on granting ICRC access to hostages and illegally detained persons. We are deeply disappointed that the Russia-backed militants again blocked the process of release of hostages and illegally detained persons at the last week’s meetings of the Trilateral Contact Group and its humanitarian working sub-group. Release of hostages remains a high humanitarian priority and we reiterate our call on Russia to speed up this process on the basis of “all-for-all” principle, as agreed in Minsk.

We underline that the relevant provision of the Minsk Package of measures applies equally to Nadiya Savchenko, Oleh Sentsov, Oleksandr Kolchenko and other Ukrainian citizens, who are held in illegal detention in Russia.

Distinguished colleagues,

We hope that the Normandy Ministerial meeting, scheduled for 11 May in Berlin, will result in a new impetus to ensure de-escalation on the ground. There is an urgent need to stop the security degradation that we have observed in Donbas over the past months and to ensure full and good-faith implementation of the Minsk agreements, starting with its initial security provisions. This includes sustainable and comprehensive ceasefire, verified withdrawal of heavy weapons and unfettered OSCE monitoring throughout the conflict area, including at the border with Russia.

Unfortunately, until now Russia and its proxies have failed to comply with the above Minsk provisions, thus making the progress on other aspects of the Minsk agreements,

including on the political track, elusive. What is required is a safe and secure environment in Donbas and we consider that an armed police mission, deployed in the areas of withdrawal of heavy weapons and along the uncontrolled sections of the Ukrainian-Russian border, can be a critical element of the efficient international response to bring about settlement of the conflict.

We expect that the upcoming Normandy Ministerial will address the issue of qualitative improvement of the international engagement and toolbox, assigned to respond to the conflict in Donbas. The fundamental problem, however, remains as Russia is thus far unwilling to practically contribute to de-escalation and regularly violates its own commitments, undertaken under the Minsk agreements and in the Normandy format. Until this attitude is changed, it remains essential that the international community maintains its political and economic pressure on the Russian Federation.

Mr.Chairman,

We note the decisions on the situation in Ukraine, adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on 27 April, as yet another contribution to the international solidarity and support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers again condemned the illegal attempted annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and expressed concern at the deterioration of the human rights situation on the Crimean peninsula, including the denial of freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of religion and belief, and the repression against persons belonging to minorities, in particular the Crimean Tatars and the Mejlis as their self-governing body. In this regard, the Ministers called for full compliance with international human rights standards and for the investigation of all pending cases of human rights violations.

The Delegation of Ukraine reiterates that responsibility for human rights violations in Crimea rests on the Russian Federation as the occupying power in accordance with international law and urges it to allow free and unconditional access of the international monitors to the occupied peninsula to enable permanent monitoring of the human rights situation.

Distinguished colleagues,

I conclude by reiterating our persistent call on the Russian Federation to immediately take practical steps to implement its commitments on peaceful resolution in Donbas, undertaken in Minsk, and to exert its influence on the militants it supports to do likewise. Until now this has not happened.

We urge Russia to restore its respect for the norms of international law and the OSCE principles and commitments, to halt its aggression against Ukraine and reverse the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

**Thank you, Mr.Chairman.**