



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 Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1225th meeting of the Permanent Council,
11 April 2019

Mr. Chairperson,

Last week, when the SMM Chief monitor presented his report to the Permanent Council, we recalled the root-cause of Ukraine's request for deployment of this OSCE mission five years ago. This root-cause remains present today as Russia's aggression continues unabated. We are grateful for strong international solidarity with Ukraine, expressed, in particular, in the last week's Communiqué of 6 April 2019 by the G7 Foreign Ministers who reiterated enduring support for Ukrainian sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and recalled that Russia's actions against Ukraine constituted a violation of international law. Ukraine is confident of the utmost need for persistence and determination in taking the Russian Federation to account for its flagrant breach of the fundamental principles of the rules-based security order in Europe.

Unfortunately, until now the Russian authorities defy their commitments and continue to perpetrate violence and destruction in Donbas, taking away lives of Ukrainian citizens, both civilians and servicemen, and further aggravating the dire humanitarian situation on the ground. In one month since the latest recommitment to ceasefire took effect on 8 March, the Russian armed formations carried out 239 attacks from different types of weapons, including 144 from the Minsk-proscribed weapons. They fired 1010 mortar rounds and 53 artillery shells at the Ukrainian military positions and residential areas. These attacks killed 12 Ukrainian servicemen and left 44 wounded. On 5 April the Russian armed formations used artillery systems of 152mm and 122mm calibre. Examination of the impact sites revealed the use of a guided artillery shell

“Krasnopol”. These shells are among the latest Russian high-precision developments, belong to the armament of artillery units of the Russian armed forces and are produced by “Kalashnikov” military-industrial company. The Russian armed formations maintain their positions, breaching the agreed contact line, and refuse substantive discussion on the additional measures proposed by the Ukrainian side within the TCG to establish the sustainable and comprehensive ceasefire in Donbas. Approaching the Easter holiday, we urge the Russian side to deliver on its responsibility as a party to the conflict and proceed to a real recommitment to ceasefire – lasting and irreversible. This will also require further steps in implementing the security provisions of the Minsk agreements: withdrawal of all Russian troops, mercenaries and weapons from the territory of Ukraine under the OSCE monitoring. Hundreds of the Russian tanks, howitzers, MLRS and mortars, which continue to be registered in the Russia-occupied parts of Donbas by the SMM patrols, UAVs and aerial imagery available to the SMM, must leave the Ukrainian soil and return to their permanent locations in the territory of the Russian Federation. The highly sophisticated Russian military equipment designated for radio-electronic warfare, must also move out back to Russia. Thousands of mines brought from Russia and planted in the Ukrainian land pose a serious threat to civilians, but also to qualified de-mining personnel. Two days ago, on 9 April, the de-mining group of the Ministry of Emergency was doing clearance work near the water pumping station close to Zaitseve when an explosion happened. It killed one sapper and seriously wounded two other. The SMM presented an account of the tragic consequences of the explosion in the daily report circulated on 10 April 2019. There is an urgent need for establishing international control at the border with Russia to interrupt the Russian supplies of weaponry, ammunition and mines which sustain conflict and kill Ukrainians.

Unfortunately, for now, contrary to commitments, the Russian forces in Donbas continue to systematically impede the OSCE SMM in performing its tasks, including those envisaged by the Minsk agreements on monitoring, verification and facilitation. For now, these objectives remain unattainable, as the Russian armed formations aim at impairing the Mission’s monitoring wherever the observers are able to spot Russia’s heavy weapons or military activities. The Russian side established in the occupied areas of Donbas a high density of sophisticated Russian jamming and electronic warfare systems, again spotted by the SMM in the last few days near Brianka, Luhansk city, Konkove and Starobesheve, with the last two locations being a zone within which deployment of heavy armaments and military equipment is proscribed by the Minsk Memorandum. The Russian delegation leaves without answer our questions about the Russian complex “Tirada-2”, recently spotted by the SMM in Donbas. On 1 April the SMM again registered, this time in Luhansk city, the Russian jamming system R-330Zh Zhitel. On 2 and 4 April the SMM spotted in different locations of the Donetsk region the Russian electronic counter measure

system “Leer-3”. We urge the Russian Federation to provide explanations. These systems pose serious threats to the SMM’s UAVs, the most costly technical assets of the mission, which in many cases remain the only possibility to reach the areas, to which access of the ground patrols is denied by the Russian fighters. Most recently the Russian side downed two SMM’s long-range UAVs, in October 2018 and February 2019, and so far has not offered any compensation. We urge the Russian Federation to take effective measures to stop impunity in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas and to inform the Permanent Council about these measures. We also repeatedly called on Russia to put an end to attacks on and intimidation of the SMM monitors who make every effort to perform their tasks well. Let me reiterate – the tasks that all 57 participating States assigned to them. However, on 2 April again an SMM patrol was targeted by a car driven by men in military-style attire near Russia-occupied Zaichenko - the zone within which deployment of heavy armaments and military equipment is proscribed by the Minsk Memorandum. The irresponsible behavior of the Russian side and its persistence in breaching the SMM’s mandate make absolutely clear the determination of the occupiers to hide their military activity from the eyes of the international community. We condemn this behavior of the Russian Federation, demand to lift all restrictions affecting the SMM and to ensure the safety and security of the SMM in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is utterly unacceptable that in the humanitarian area, instead of fulfilling commitments on opening the Zolote entry-exit checkpoint to make it easier for the people to cross the contact line in Luhansk region, the Russian side deliberately aims to make the situation even more difficult by closing existing checkpoints and opening fire at them. The SMM reported last week about the decision of the Russian armed formations to close, starting from 19 March, the pedestrian checkpoint in Betmanove, depriving over 4,000 people living on both sides of the contact line of the possibility to go to work and school, or to visit their relatives. On 5 April, the Russian fighters directed small arms fire at the entry-exit checkpoint near Marinka, where large numbers of civilians regularly cross the contact line. Two Ukrainian servicemen who helped civilians to escape from the line of fire got wounded, as confirmed by the SMM report released on 8 April. What happened showcases the contempt of the Russian side for civilians in Donbas and their needs. We condemn such behavior and call upon the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship to react to these developments which increase the hardships for civilians. We expect steps to be taken to motivate Russia to let realize Ukraine’s initiatives of opening the Zolote EECP and of repairing the bridge near Stanytsa Luhanska. In the meantime, the Ukrainian authorities continue improving the infrastructure at the existing EECPs, most recently – in Hnutove checkpoint from 5 to 9 April.

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of Ukraine repeatedly drew attention to the tendency of constant increase of the number of Ukrainian citizens illegally detained, sentenced, and persecuted by the Russian occupation authorities in Crimea. On 4 April, the so called “Sevastopol City Court” sentenced Mr. Volodymyr Dudka and Mr. Oleksiy Bessarabov to 14 years of imprisonment each in a high security penal colony. They were captured in Sevastopol on 9 November 2016 and faced trumped-up charges of preparing sabotage acts and possessing weapons. As emphasised by the Foreign Ministry of Ukraine, fabrication of politically motivated cases against Ukrainian citizens remains one of the key repressive policies of the Russian occupants in Crimea aimed at intimidating local population and stifling any discontent with the illegal occupation of this part of Ukraine’s territory. The same day, Mr. Volodymyr Balukh, a Ukrainian farmer convicted for hoisting a Ukrainian flag in his private house in Crimea and illegally transferred recently to the territory of the Russian Federation in violation of the international humanitarian law, was locked up for unknown reasons into a maximum security cell for two weeks.

Severe persecutions continue to target Crimean Tatars and their families. Parents of those who were captured by the Russian occupants under false accusations, including 23 Crimean Tatars detained two weeks ago, stage single-person pickets throughout Crimea with banners reading “My son is not a terrorist”. On 8 April, mother and wife of Enver Mamutov, charged last year with so called “organizing a Hizb ut-Tahrir group” and detained currently in Rostov on the Don, were taken to the police station and later released without any protocol. We expect from the OSCE institutions a meaningful reaction to the large-scale repressions and flagrant violation of human rights carried out by the occupation authorities.

Russia continues to deny access of the international missions and human rights organisations, as well as the OSCE and its structures including the SMM, to the occupied Crimean peninsula. We urge Russia to lift all respective restrictions.

Mr. Chairperson,

We again draw attention to the fate of 24 Ukrainian servicemen captured by the Russian Federation in the act of armed aggression against Ukraine near the Kerch Strait. These servicemen are prisoners of war, as confirmed in the UN mission report, and must be treated in full accordance with the Geneva Conventions. In this context we also wish to point out to the statement released on 9 April 2019 by the Russian human rights centre “Memorial”. The Centre stressed concurrence with the legal conclusion that the so called “Kerch incident” was an international armed conflict and that the captured Ukrainian

sailors are prisoners of war. The Russian authorities are demanded to cease criminal persecution of the captured servicemen and ensure their release. Before the release happens, they must be treated in accordance with the Third Geneva Convention. This position echoes the demands already formulated by the international community and directed to Russia's authorities. We urge Russia to stop flagrant defiance of international humanitarian law and release the captured Ukrainian servicemen immediately and unconditionally.

We again urge the Russian Federation to reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea 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.