



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

**Statement in response to the CiO Special Representative in Ukraine
and the TCG Heidi Grau and the SMM Chief Monitor Yasar Halit Cevik**

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1323rd meeting of the Permanent Council
8 July 2021

Madam Chairperson,

We thank both speakers for presenting their comprehensive and thought-provoking reports today. They confirm current impasse in the Trilateral Contact Group consultations and deteriorating security stance on the ground. The combination of these factors stems from Russia's principled reluctance to admit its responsibility as a party to the conflict. This remains the main obstacle to reaching peace.

When there is no substantial movement ahead in resolving the conflict, the situation can only deteriorate. As reported by the SMM, the number of ceasefire violations increased almost threefold, from 7.5 thousand to almost 21 thousand, with geographical spread of armed violence spanning the entire length of the contact line.

This rapid growth began in March, simultaneously with Russia's intensive military build-up along the border with Ukraine and in its temporarily occupied parts, which has been in a spotlight of the OSCE in the past months. In the same period of time, since 21 March, the SMM began experiencing increased levels of GPS signal interference: the number of cases increased almost fourfold, from 166 to 619. The most heavily targeted were long-range UAVs, able to spot Russia's illegal military activities across the state border, including in the night time. This could not be a coincidence.

The number of weapons in violation of their respective withdrawal lines has grown from 435 to 670. Predominant majority of such weapons (87% this time) was, as always, recorded in the Russia-occupied territories. This number would be even more appalling, if the Russian side did not restrict the SMM freedom of movement.

The SMM data confirm the scale of Russia's military threats delivered against Ukraine as a part of Kremlin's efforts to undermine it and make Ukraine pursue Russia-imposed track of resolution of the conflict.

Russia not only rattles its sabres, but also prevents any meaningful progress in the TCG, linking it to fulfilment of Russia's blackmailing demands, such as so-called "direct dialogue" with its occupation administrations in Donetsk and Luhansk. The information, provided today by Special Representative Heidi Grau on the consultations in the TCG and its Working Groups, speaks for itself. The last meeting of the TCG, held this week, was again unsuccessful due to Russia's requests to send any proposals or information directly to its occupation administrations.

The biggest problem is that this impasse in the TCG has a very negative impact on the lives of thousands of Ukrainian citizens in the conflict-affected areas.

When Russia blocks additional disengagement areas, it provokes its illegal armed formations to fire at Ukrainian military positions and residential areas. On 4 and 5 July alone, they left 2 Ukrainian servicemen dead and 4 wounded.

When it blocks a decision on 19 demining zones, despite clear agreement reached in the Working Group on Security Issues, it causes additional civilian casualties due to mines and UXOs, which, according to the SMM data, became the main source of such casualties in 2021.

When Russia blocks opening additional EECs, it leaves hundreds of thousands of civilians cut from their families, administrative services and medical treatment in the government-controlled areas.

When it blocks the next stage of mutual release of detainees, it leaves hundreds of people in their current position.

We reiterate our condemnation of Russia's tactics in the TCG. Using civilians as hostages in order to push Ukraine to "direct talks" with the Russian occupation administrations is inhumane and unacceptable.

Chief Monitor, last time when you presented your report to the Permanent Council, I finished my statement by addressing two specific requests to you: on the socio-economic consequences of impediments to the freedom of navigation in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, imposed by the Russian Federation, and on the forced conscription taking place in the occupied parts of Donetsk region. I thank you for taking these requests onboard and instructing the Mission to highlight both topics in the reports. This was a good example of added value, which the SMM's presence on the ground can provide to participating States.

The Government of Ukraine continues to support the SMM activities. Any attacks and threats against the Mission's members, such as was the case on 28 June near Petrivske, when the members of the Russian armed formations threatened to lay mines on the road so that the Mission could not return to the area, cannot be tolerated. We thank the brave men and women of the SMM who continue to implement the Mission's mandate in such challenging security environment.

We took note, in particular, of the twofold increase of patrols near border areas in the occupied territories, despite a routine denial of access to the border crossing points and train stations, imposed by the Russian armed formations.

The SMM's findings remain useful as an unbiased source of facts, which confirm Russia's wrongdoings in the conflict zone. The Mission reported on such facts as outgoing explosions of artillery rounds near the centre of Donetsk city on 16 June; dozens of anti-personnel mines, which are banned in Ukraine and could be transferred only from Russia; a number of cargo trains and military-type vehicles near the border where there are no border crossing facilities; and Russian modern weapon systems, such as the electronic warfare system "RB-636V Svet-KU".

We welcome the fact that the SMM's monitoring in the reporting period was not limited to the security issues. The Mission informed on such violations of Ukraine's sovereignty by Russia as illegal passports and so-called "Border and Customs" introduced by the occupiers. It has also reported on abuses of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the occupied parts of Donbas, such as illegal seizure of property of the internally displaced persons who left their homes in Donetsk and Luhansk, fleeing from Russian occupation.

Last Tuesday, on 6 July, during the OSCE PA Plenary Session, the Head of the Russian Delegation to the OSCE PA, Mr. Petr Tolstoy, said, I quote, "Yes, those are our

citizens in Donetsk and Luhansk, whom we will protect”. The Russian passports and other attributes of Russia’s sovereignty in the temporarily occupied parts of Ukraine pose the most serious threat not only to Ukraine, but to the entire security architecture in Europe. We call on the SMM to continue monitoring these issues.

We are fully aware of the challenges, which the SMM faces in its activities. Predominant majority of restrictions to its freedom of movement continues to take place in the occupied parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The Russian armed formations stop the SMM patrols, jam its UAVs and destroy its cameras. This is a long-standing pattern, which for years prevents the Mission from implementing its monitoring mandate.

Let me stress again that opening additional forward patrol bases close to the uncontrolled part of the Ukrainian-Russian border would significantly improve the SMM’s capacities and safety of its patrols and technical assets. We urge the Russian side to stop its obstruction policy and provide the necessary security guarantees.

The most problematic part of the SMM mandate remains Crimea, to which the Russian occupation administration denies any access for the Mission. We remain convinced that the SMM, even in these conditions, has a potential to strengthen its Crimea-related activities, either through establishment of remote monitoring in accordance with the UN methodology, or through other means.

We remain at your disposal, Chief Monitor, to discuss the details. The need to increase the SMM monitoring in Crimea and along the border was emphasized among others by President Zelenskyy and Foreign Minister Kuleba during the recent visits by Chairperson-in-Office Linde and Secretary General Schmid to Ukraine. These issues will remain at the top of our agenda.

Finally, as this is the last appearance of Special Representative Grau to the Permanent Council, I would end my statement by expressing a sincere gratitude to her for the significant contribution she made to the work of the TCG. We will miss your energy at the TCG, dear Heidi, and your pertinent remarks debunking Russia’s fakes at the PC meetings.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.