



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 1326th meeting of the Permanent Council
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Madam Chairperson,

The most recent SMM weekly report reminds us that, I quote, “one year ago, on 27 July 2020, the respective ceasefire orders containing additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire were issued and enacted, following the agreement reached on 22 July 2020 in the Trilateral Contact Group, with the participation of representatives of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine”, end of quote.

Let me stress: the agreement was reached in the TCG, which, as is well known from the very first sentence of the Minsk Protocol of 5 September 2014, consists of Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE. The so-called representatives of certain areas simply take part in the TCG meetings, as was in particular mentioned by the SMM. They are neither party to the additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire, nor to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in whole.

This is a very simple truth, expressed by Ukraine, SMM and OSCE participating States, with the only exception of Russia, which continues to spread its fake narratives, preventing meaningful progress in resolution of the conflict.

The chart, provided by the SMM in the same weekly report, clearly shows a sharp spike in the number of ceasefire violations in Donbas, which began in April 2021, simultaneously with Russia's intensive military build-up along the border with Ukraine and in the occupied Crimea. Both of these trends continue, regrettably, until now.

The fragility and unpredictability of the security situation in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine can be demonstrated by the SMM daily report issued two days ago, on 27 July. I will quote a part of it: “in Donetsk region, the SMM recorded 394 ceasefire violations, including 119 explosions. In the previous 24 hours, it recorded 10 ceasefire violations in the region. In Luhansk region, the Mission recorded no ceasefire violations. In the previous 24 hours, it recorded 138 ceasefire violations in the region”, end of quote.

Those are not simply numbers. The ceasefire violations bring casualties and damage to infrastructure. On 26 July, in one single day, seven Ukrainian servicemen were wounded, two of them heavily wounded, when the Russian

armed formations launched 25 shells of 122mm artillery, banned by the Minsk agreements. On the same day, the SMM corroborated injury by shrapnel of a civilian person in the eastern part of government-controlled Mar'inka.

Overall, one year of the ceasefire agreed last July brought undeniable positive results. Even with deterioration of security situation since the end of 2020, the number of military casualties among Ukrainian servicemen dropped twofold (from 88 to 45) for killed in action and threefold (from 494 to 163) for the wounded. The life of civilians, as confirmed by numerous reports by the SMM, has become safer. We call on the Russian side to return to the ceasefire, and to ensure its comprehensive and sustainable character.

To that end, we need the SMM to have safe and secure access to the Russia-occupied areas in order to be able to monitor violations of ceasefire and other security provisions of the Minsk agreements.

The SMM long-range UAV flights continue to be temporarily suspended, which greatly benefits the Russian side with its illegal supplies delivered to the armed formations across the uncontrolled segment of the border. When the Mission's ground patrols reach the border areas or railway stations in the occupied parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, they are immediately told to leave the area.

In some cases, the SMM patrols face challenges in the Russia-occupied areas, which are simply unacceptable. On 23 July, two armed members of the Russian armed formations at the checkpoint near Nova Marivka accused the Mission of transporting non-SMM personnel and allowed the patrol to proceed only after observing that only SMM personnel were in the vehicles. Two days later, at a checkpoint in Kozatske, two members of the Russian armed formations, one of whom visibly armed, forced the SMM patrol to move from a paved road to a secondary unpaved route, putting the patrol in danger.

We again urge the Russian side to lift all restrictions and impediments, which it has imposed on the SMM activities, and to allow the Mission to implement its mandate, agreed by all participating States. This remains critical, in particular, for ensuring fulfilment of the Minsk agreements.

In this vein, let me again raise the issue of Russian passports, illegally distributed to the residents of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, as one of the most flagrant violations of the Minsk agreements by the Russian Federation. I would remind that these agreements are aimed at full restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty in the parts of Donbas, temporarily occupied by Russia. Granting Russian citizenship in a massive and simplified manner, without the consent of Ukraine, is definitely not a step in the right direction.

The MFA of Ukraine stressed in its statement of 23 July that, I quote, "Ukraine demands from the Russian Federation to revoke all unlawful decisions taken with regard to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and to stop taking steps aimed at further integration of the population of the temporarily occupied territories into political, social and legal space of the Russian Federation", end of quote.

I would add to this a historic space as well. Last Friday, First Deputy Chairman of the Russian State Duma Committee on CIS Affairs, Eurasian Integration and Relations with Compatriots Viktor Vodolackiy stated that the owners of Russian passports in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine would be able to vote electronically, from their personal computers, while formally such voting will be considered as taking place in the Rostov region of

the Russian Federation, which he called, I quote, “a historical homeland of Luhansk and Donetsk”, end of quote.

Russia continues to impose its perverted views of the history of Ukraine, Ukrainian nation and Ukrainian people. In those parts of Ukraine, which are currently occupied by Russia, it eliminated anything that could prevent it from reaching this scope. Ukrainian education, language, and media are persecuted and replaced with the Russian ones. Last week, the SMM observed that a large number of books were abandoned near the new span of the Stanytsia Luhanska bridge by a woman who reportedly was not allowed to bring them to the Russia-occupied areas. It seems only the books stating Rostov as a homeland for Luhansk and Donetsk are allowed to enter.

The Crimean peninsula, another part of Ukraine’s sovereign territory occupied by the Russian Federation, also faces massive persecutions of those residents who do not wish to join Russia’s multifaceted space. According to the data gathered by the “Crimean Tatar Resource Center” NGO, in the first half of 2021 the number of illegal searches held by the Russian occupiers in the homes of Crimean residents reached 33, compared to 23 in the first half of 2020. The number of illegal detentions has grown even more, from 48 to 156, also compared to a similar period of the last year. The charges, filed against them, were based primarily on allegations of belonging to the organizations banned in Russia, denying forced military conscription, so-called “terrorism” or even “high treason”.

We strongly condemn Russia’s policy of silencing dissenting voices in the temporarily occupied parts of Ukraine. We remind the Russian side that the local civilian population is protected by the norms of international humanitarian law. It is high time for Russia to finally learn them.

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.