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**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 1246<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
7 November 2019

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine continues unabated. We share assessments by many delegations in this hall that the security situation along the contact line in Donbas remains tense, volatile and unpredictable. Every day, the Russian armed formations fire, including with the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons, on government-controlled parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. The Russian proxies continue restricting the freedom of movement of the SMM, preventing the Mission's ability to register those violations of ceasefire. Russia's hybrid warfare in Donbas increases daily the number of casualties and damage to the infrastructure in the conflict-affected areas. The scale of destruction is clearly visible in the recently released SMM thematic report on facilitation and monitoring of infrastructure repair in eastern Ukraine. Civilians and residential areas continue to be targeted. On 4 November, a school in Novotoshkiivske was shelled by the Russian armed formations, and children were forced to evacuate. Fortunately, no one suffered.

Despite this, Ukraine demonstrates necessary political will to implement its commitments undertaken in the Minsk agreements, which it signed with another party to the conflict, the Russian Federation. We proceed with disengagement of forces and hardware in the designated areas, even while the security provisions on a comprehensive ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons and foreign armed formations from the territory of Ukraine are not implemented. It is a good-will gesture, which proves our resolve to stop the armed conflict brought to our territory by Russia.

Last Friday, on 1 November, Ukraine and Russia completed the disengagement of forces and hardware at Zolote disengagement area. Now, this area will be demined and military fortifications removed. We hope the Russian side will stick to its commitments, and the disengagement will bring more safety and security to the local residents. We condemn the illegal trip of a member of the Russian parliament Mr. Zhuravliov to the Russia-occupied part of Luhansk region. Verification is ongoing whether he visited Zolote disengagement area. The MFA of Ukraine expressed its strong protest to the Russian side and urged it to stop violating Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and national legislation. We call the OSCE SMM to provide information on this trip, as the Mission's monitors were present on the ground at that time, as demonstrated by the video footage released by the Russian propaganda.

The next disengagement area, in which Ukraine and Russia will proceed, is Petrivske. As the last ceasefire violation in it was registered by the SMM on 30 October, mutual withdrawal of forces

and hardware will start tomorrow, on 8 November, at noon, if until then the Russian side refrains from further provocations in this area.

We remind the Russian delegation that the presence of members of the Russian armed formations wearing armbands with “JCCC” written on them, whom the SMM continues to see on the daily basis in the disengagement areas, is strictly prohibited according to para 8 of the TCG Framework decision relating to disengagement of forces and hardware. After the Russian Federation had unilaterally and groundlessly withdrawn its officers from this bilateral structure, no one, including the Russian proxies, was entitled to replace them.

Last Thursday, on 31 October, another so-called “humanitarian convoy” illegally crossed the Ukrainian-Russian state border and entered the occupied parts of Donbas. The trucks with Russian Federation licence plates were observed the same day by the SMM in the Russian armed formations walled compounds. We again remind the Russian side that delivery, storage, and distribution of humanitarian assistance in Donbas must take place on the basis of an international mechanism, as stipulated by the Minsk Package of Measures.

The SMM patrols face daily restrictions of their freedom of movement in Russia-occupied parts of Donbas. Half of the monitors visits to the border crossing points at the uncontrolled segment of the state border are denied. More and more, the members of the Russian armed formations deny the SMM passage by citing, I quote, “orders from superiors”, end of quote. These “superiors”, represented by the Russian delegation in this hall, must stop violating the SMM mandate and provide a safe and secure access to the Mission. The delegations of participating States reiterate this call to Russia every week. Unfortunately, it does not hear us.

What we have in the end, is that the Russian side violates its commitments under the Minsk agreements, the TCG decisions and the SMM mandate. Meanwhile, the Russian delegation continues its attempts to blame Ukraine. This is not the track we should follow, if Russia is serious on the necessity to stop the conflict it initiated.

Cessation of fire and withdrawal of the Russian armed formations from Donbas is only a part of the resolution of the conflict. These steps must be complemented with de-occupation of Crimea. We reiterate our condemnation of the ongoing persecution and pressure by the occupation authorities in the Crimean peninsula. Anyone who does not speak Russian, does not visit the churches of the Russian Orthodox Church and does not accept occupation, remains a potential victim of the Kremlin’s regime. The Ukrainian language has virtually disappeared in the Crimean schools, the temples of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in Simferopol and Yevpatoria risk being destroyed, Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians remain behind bars, detained for simply exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms. This situation, as reiterated many times before, requires close attention of the international community, including OSCE and its assets.

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.**