



**Delegation of Ukraine
to the OSCE**

Statement

As for delivery by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 996th special meeting of the Permanent Council,
22 April 2014

Mr. Chairman,

We thank the Swiss Chairmanship for convening this special Permanent Council meeting during the Easter recess in view of the latest developments in and around Ukraine.

This meeting takes place in the aftermath of quadripartite talks between Ukraine, the EU, the US and the Russian Federation held in Geneva on 17 April 2014 which resulted in agreement on initial concrete steps to de-escalate tensions and restore security for all citizens in Ukraine. It was an important international effort to seek de-escalation through diplomatic means, with participation of the Russian Federation.

In particular, it was agreed that:

- all illegal groups must be disarmed; all illegally seized buildings must be returned to legitimate owners; all illegally occupied streets, squares and other public places in Ukrainian cities and towns must be vacated;
- amnesty will be granted to protestors and to those who have left buildings and other public places and surrendered weapons, with the exception of those found guilty of capital crimes;
- the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission should play a leading role in assisting Ukrainian authorities and local communities in the immediate implementation of the de-escalation measures wherever they are needed most, beginning in the coming days. The US, EU and Russia committed to support this mission;
- the announced constitutional process will be inclusive, transparent and accountable.

The Government of Ukraine has taken steps aimed at immediate implementation of the agreements reached at the Geneva meeting.

First, the Government of Ukraine submitted to the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine a draft law on the amnesty of participants of the riots in the Eastern regions. The provisions of the document will cover the protesters who will

surrender arms and administrative buildings, except those suspected of committing grave crimes.

Second, the Parliamentary coalition invited all political forces represented in the Parliament of Ukraine to sign a Memorandum of Understanding on the ways to resolve the situation in Eastern Ukraine.

Third, the active phase of the counter-terrorism operation has been suspended. The operation itself continues. Its main task remains to ensure a security perimeter against armed separatists and to prevent civilian casualties.

Fourth, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the Concept of reforming local self-government and territorial organization of power in Ukraine, which provides for decentralization of power in the country, a significant empowerment of local communities, change of management system at regional and district levels. A broad public debate on the subject will continue until October 1, 2014.

Fifth, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Security Service continue implementing the active campaign launched earlier to seize illegal arms from the population.

Sixth, upon the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine regular consultations with the participation of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, representatives of the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship, EU, Russian Federation and U.S. were launched.

On April 18, 2014, the Ukrainian interim president Oleksandr Turchynov and Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, jointly addressed the nation, stating that the Russian language would be granted official status in the regions where it is spoken by majority population, more powers would be given to the regional authorities, amnesty would be granted to pro-Russian activists who lay down arms and vacate seized buildings.

These are concrete and meaningful steps taken by the Ukrainian Government in implementation of the Geneva agreements. Implementation of those agreements requires commitment by all parties, including the Russian Federation. So far, unfortunately, we register absence of relevant steps that could indicate commitment by the Russian Federation to implementation of Geneva agreements.

Distinguished colleagues,

The situation in Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine remains extremely tense due to aggressive separatist actions, supported by Russian subversive groups and agents on the ground, uncontrolled spread of weapons, that is now in possession of numerous individuals with criminal record. Instead of vacating the seized buildings, in the last few days attempts were made to seize other buildings that

belong to law-enforcement authorities and where firearms are present. Citizens got kidnapped by separatists in different locations of Eastern Ukraine.

On Easter, 20 April 2014, a provocation took place at an illegal checkpoint in the vicinity of the town of Slavyansk, which resulted in casualties and several wounded. The Russian TV Channel LifeNews and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs were surprisingly prompt to accuse “militants from the so-called Right Sector” of this attack on “peaceful citizens” before emergence of any verifiable information and the results of investigation by the Ukrainian competent authorities.

Further appeal by the leader of Slavyansk pro-Russian extremists to the President of the Russian Federation to send peacekeepers to the town serves testimony to the aim of this provocation.

According to the Ministry of Interior of Ukraine, the city of Slavyansk is now the most dangerous place in Ukraine. Besides general threats to the safety of local residents in view of the presence of illegal paramilitary formations as well as uncontrolled spreading of weapons, we have registered numerous reports of intimidation of Ukrainian-speaking population and anti-Roma attacks, committed by the members of these paramilitary formations. Extremists resorted to the practice of hostage-taking, focusing mainly on pro-Ukrainian activists and journalists. In particular, among those kidnapped in Slavyansk are the journalists Serhiy Lefter and Irma Krat.

Against this backdrop, statements by the Russian side, referring to the anti-terrorist operation in Donetsk and Luhansk regions as “punitive action”, are nothing but cynical in relation to local population, suffering from violence in their hometowns.

The lack of public support for the separatists’ acts of violence in the eastern regions of Ukraine is evidenced by reports of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, which observed no more than several hundred active participants of public actions near the separatist strongholds in Donetsk, Luhansk and Slavyansk over the weekend. Quite the contrary, the local residents are fearful for their safety and expect from the Ukrainian authorities to protect them, to safeguard public law and order through disbanding and disarming illegal paramilitary formations.

At the same time, the Ukrainian authorities register a growing number of provocations against the law-enforcement and military facilities where the representatives of the Russian media are incidentally first to appear on site to report their distorted narratives on use of force against peaceful citizens.

Distinguished colleagues,

Provocations by the pro-Russian armed activists directly affect the situation with the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Ukraine. Harassment, arbitrary arrest, torture, violations of freedom of expression, media freedom,

protection of journalists are among the most widespread human rights violations in the affected regions.

Completing her visit to Ukraine of 14-16 April, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Ms. Dunja Mijatović has concluded that journalists in conflict areas face violence, seizure and destruction of equipment, and threats on a daily basis. “Journalists in Crimea face additional problems with media re-registration, possible eviction from the region if they are not considered loyal and do not change citizenship, vicious labelling, threats and denial of access to public information.” The situation is qualified by the RFoM as very dangerous and alarming.

On 16 April 2014 the Assistant UN Secretary-General for Human Rights, Mr. Ivan Šimonović, presented a report based on recent visits to Ukraine, which rejected alleged human rights violations against Ukraine’s Russian-speaking citizens. The report presents ample evidence that the Ukrainian Government has taken the necessary measures to safeguard the rights of all citizens of the country.

On the other hand, according to this independent report, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea of Ukraine, annexed by Russia in violation of international law, principles and commitments, has suffered a rapid deterioration in human rights; journalists and human rights defenders have faced harassment and torture; censorship is common; and the presence of paramilitary and soldiers “widely believed to be from the Russian Federation” has sharply inhibited freedom of expression. The report raises valid concerns about the introduction of Russian citizenship in a region that does not belong to Russia; discrimination against Ukrainian citizens inside their own country.

According to the report, the most vulnerable communities in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea are considered to be the Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians who were intimidated and forced to leave their homes because of lack of safe environment and oppression of their rights and freedoms.

These concerns are further substantiated in the last two days by an attack of uniformed men on the building of Mejlis in Simferopol, threats by the self-proclaimed Crimean leader to announce the Mejlis as an “extremist organization” and his advice to the Crimean Tatars to leave Crimea.

In this regard it is crucial to ensure independent monitoring of human rights situation in Crimea. We call on the occupying authorities to allow international monitors, including from the OSCE, to get access to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

Mr. Chairman,

The Ukrainian government has acted responsibly throughout this crisis, including confronted with the annexation of its territory by the Russian Federation and ongoing breach by this state of international law and the core OSCE principles and commitments.

The Geneva agreements presented an opportunity, through dialogue, to undertake initial immediate steps aimed at de-escalation where most needed.

We call on the Russian Federation to implement its part of the Geneva agreements, that would allow further progress towards de-escalation of the situation in the eastern regions of Ukraine.

In light of the recent developments and the leading role to be played by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine in assisting immediate implementation of the de-escalation measures under the Geneva agreement, it is important to rapidly expand the composition of Special Monitoring Mission.

I will conclude this statement by reiterating our call on the Russian Federation to renew full and good-faith implementation of its international obligations and the OSCE principles and commitments, in particular on respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other participating States.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.