

*Statement by*

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*Ladies and Gentleman*

Our NGO Maidan of Foreign Affairs together with our partner web-portal The Black Sea News represented here by its Editor-in-Chief Mr. Andrii Klymenko are not only covering the Russian military aggression in Ukraine since mid-February 2014 but is the only Ukrainian institution that summarized the picture and published the Strategy of Returning the Crimea last year.

We are convinced that situation in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine is directly connected and should be kept in the same frame for political analysis. Honestly speaking the picture will still be incomplete without analyzing the Russian intervention into Ukraine aside of what is happening in Transdnistria in Moldova, Abkhazia and Ossetia in Georgia.

The time limits will not allow me to do it in a proper way.

Nevertheless, the issue of human rights in the conflict areas in Ukraine and in particular in the annexed Crimea should not and cannot be properly addressed without broader overview of the political, military, security, economic and social situation.

So, we decided to share the responsibilities. With your permission I will cover the general issues in order to allow my dear friend and colleague Mr. Andrii Klymenko to concentrate fully on the issues of human rights.

Political preferences were not the main reason for the annexation of the Crimea (the local parliament, elected in 2012, included only 3 deputies out of 100 who represented the pro-Russian movements and organizations).

A fear of ethnic and interreligious conflicts has been artificially enforced by the Russian propaganda within a short period of time as the active phase of the annexation plan was being implemented (in winter 2014); this fear was an additional factor that reinforced the overall concerns of the citizens.

The main propaganda messages directed towards the citizens of Ukraine from the Russian side covered the issues of the "quality of life" and "quality of government" (the media has created an illusion of greater efficiency of the Russian authorities compared to the Ukrainian ones, and of the readiness of the Russian state to ensure the better socio-economic life conditions without any efforts made by the citizens of Ukraine).

Invasion Scenario:

1. Presence of the Russian citizens, including the military personnel from the intelligence agencies, primarily from the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. Together with the pro-Russian activists among the local residents and citizens of Ukraine, they organized rallies, fights, mass disturbances, and violent confrontations with patriotic citizens.

2. A premeditated escalation used as an excuse for creating the self-defense units that include both local residents and the Russian citizens infiltrated specifically for such purposes.

3. In the Eastern Ukraine, these units seized administrative buildings and paralyzed the activity of the state bodies, which in turn stepped away from solving problems, and in some cases supported anti-state actions. In Crimea, the self-defense units were a cover-up that was covering the covert actions of special units of the army of the Russian Federation. They were the ones who seized the government agencies and blocked military units of the Ukrainian army.

4. Establishment of the pseudo governments that took over the responsibility over the management of the occupied territories. The mentioned pseudo governments imitated a freedom of expression which was used as justification or explanation of the aggression.

The inability or unwillingness of the legitimate authorities to take measures for a quick and decisive suppression of these trends, an attempt to calm down the protesters or aggressors was regarded as weakness, encouraged the aggressor, demoralized the supporters.

Corruption, common business interests of the local and central authorities with the relevant public and private bodies of the aggressor state were actively used as mechanisms for influencing and compromising the political will for resistance.

The annexation of Crimea has become the first case of invasion of the territory in Europe since the Second World War. The mentioned situation calls into question the existence or the effectiveness of international law and the international security guarantees, thus threatening the existing world order.

### *The Current State of Affairs*

A "hot phase" of the armed conflict in the Eastern Ukraine is still ongoing. However, the so-called Minsk agreements do not function as a ceasefire mechanism, do not lead to the

establishment of sustainable peace and do not provide a solution to the problem of the territorial integrity restoration of Ukraine.

The escalation phases coincide with the international negotiations on peace-settlement (they are effectively used by Russia as a tool of pressure on negotiating parties).

The occupied areas of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions suffered from a large-scale destruction of the infrastructure and residential buildings resulting from the combat operations.

An industrial infrastructure was partially destroyed, plundered and transported to Russia (in particular, defense enterprises were completely dismantled and transported to Russia). The current condition of the industrial infrastructure does not allow to predict a possibility of the restoration of the pre-war regional economy structure and, consequently, of the social structure of the population. About 2.5 million people (about the third of the overall number of inhabitants), mainly the most educated and active part of the society, became forced migrants and refugees.

Prospects for resolving the situation in the East of Ukraine (the problem of "specific areas of Donetsk and Lugansk regions") are uncertain.

Forced migrants and political fugitives from Crimea (about 40 thousand people) represented the most active and loyal citizens of Ukraine.

In general, the public mood in Crimea can be described as follows:

- At the beginning of the Crimean occupation the residents were
  - fully satisfied with the Ukrainian legal liberalism,
  - not satisfied with quality of life,
  - not satisfied with the quality of government.
- As a result of occupation, as for now the residents of Crimea
  - have not received the improvement of the quality of government, it actually deteriorated,
  - have not got better quality of life, it actually deteriorated,
  - have lost Ukrainian legal liberalism.

A phase of adaptation to the law of the occupying country in Crimea is over, and a process of reclamation of the assets of the annexed territory is ongoing- this process can be described as colonization.

Replacement or "dilution" of the Crimean population is taking place - "the import of the Russians", including the military personnel and their families, officers of the intelligence

agencies and their families, officials and their family members, members of the Russian organized crime groups from the North Caucasian regions of Russia, is still ongoing. Thus, according to the official Russian statistics, the increase of number of the Russian immigrants in Sevastopol during the occupation was about 25,000 people, or about 7% of the population. In the rest of Crimea, this rate is somewhat lower - 10 thousand people, or 0.5% of the population.

The occupying authorities are developing Crimea mainly as a military base. The number of troops is about 50 thousand people, not including the members of the security agencies. The development process and increase of the military grouping has not yet been completed; however, according to the objectives defined by the Minister of Defense of Russia, the number of Russian troops in Crimea can be increased to 100-120 thousand people.

The invaders turned the Crimea to a rehabilitation center for the militants fighting in the east of Ukraine. Training camps for training of the mercenaries later directed to fight against the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions have been established in Crimea.

Crimea has become a basic center of support of the Russian military grouping in Syria.

Forming a powerful military base in Crimea, Russia threatens both the southern regions of Ukraine and the existing Black Sea naval communications, as well as the European countries - NATO member-states (Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey).

The road infrastructure in the occupied territories has been fully or largely destroyed. During the period of the Crimean occupation, the loading of the roadbed had been increased in tens of times, primarily owing to the movement of large numbers of heavy military vehicles (armored vehicles, tanks and other heavy equipment). Intensive military building in Crimea led to accelerated destruction of roads. All programs of the road construction of Russia in Crimea turned to be a usual "patching work" of a very poor quality.

The Crimean economic assets are being stolen or lose their capacity. Railways, ports are not actually used.

Without proper irrigation, the agricultural soils lose their fertility, while their salinity is increasing. Natural resources of Crimea are being destroyed. The unscrupulous extraction of the fresh underground water has led to the raise of saline groundwater level in some areas (Kerch Peninsula), leading to increase of the soil salinity; furthermore, it complicates the water supply to the population.

Given the intense military building, the occupants increase the volume of the quarry mines development, and open up the new quarries for gravel extraction, which can result in destruction of the microclimate, e.g. in the valleys of the Bakhchisarai area (Alma Valley).

The situation with the quality of life in Crimea has developed in such a way that under systematic reduction of employment (according to our calculations, since the annexation about 200 thousand jobs, primarily in tourism, restaurant and hotel business, services, small business and transport, have been lost), the available vacancies are not filled. Today there are 2,000 vacancies of municipal officials in Crimea, as well as a large number of jobs in health care; generally, it is difficult to fill the vacancies of ordinary employees in the business structures.

### ***What happens next?***

Developments in Eastern Ukraine are hard to predict because the hot phase of the conflict is still ongoing. Russia as a state-aggressor has sufficient resources to continue military actions, its probable political purposes in Ukraine and in Europe have not been achieved, the means of influence on Russia, such as international sanctions, just begin to influence the Russian economy and the political will of the leadership of the Russian Federation to continue the aggression, but their duration in time is uncertain.

In Crimea, the main trends affecting the current developments are as follows:

1. The main priority is to develop a territory as a military base

Consequences:

- Posing threat to security of the Black Sea region, the EU Member States and NATO (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey), change of the military balance, namely within the framework of the Agreement on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, and possibly within the framework of the agreements in the field of strategic nuclear weapons control; persistent military threat to the entire southern coast of Ukraine with the purpose to implement the plan of setting up a land "corridor" between the Russian Federation, Crimea and Transnistria, militarization of the region, expansion of the Russian military presence in Syria and the consequent armed confrontation and civil war in that country;
- Further enforcement of the policy of "forced loyalty" towards the inhabitants of the Crimea, which will lead to further violation of the human rights (the pressure on dissidents, on disloyal groups of population), strengthening control over the media;
- Implementation of strategic infrastructure building projects - a bridge across the Kerch Strait, the energy bridge;

- The need to increase supply of building materials and equipment (primarily the metal, timber, construction mixes, crushed stone), which will lead to increased pressure on the road infrastructure and increased use of local natural resources, which, in turn, results in poor climatic balance in the number of sub-regions of Crimea.

## 2. Lack of economic development strategy, lack of managerial human resources

Consequences:

- A trend towards reducing the number of small and medium-sized enterprises (the set priority is to develop and support the large companies, mainly in the defense sector); unemployment growth; reduction of the tax capacity in the region, increase of dependence on direct funding from the federal budget of Russia. Redirection of the budget financial flows in Russia, financing deficit in other regions of the Russian Federation, concealed contradictions and competition for obtaining a funding between different regions of the Russian Federation;

- Decrease of the standard of living; decrease of the consumer purchasing power of the population (increase of prices, fewer choice for consumers, lowering of the quality of food); increase of the social stratification and increasing differences in living standards among the citizens funded by the state/federal/regional budgets, and self-employed people and employees of commercial structures; gradual growth of social tension;

- Continuation of policy of the excessive use of infrastructure and natural resources, environmental degradation - changing of the climatic balance, loss of underground fresh water deposits, lowering of fertility, of the quality of agricultural lands, the gradual reduction of their area. As a result, lowering of the ability of Crimea to ensure the self-sustained food security.

3. Continuation of the trend towards resettlements of the citizens with simultaneous degradation of democratic institutions, human rights and freedoms, increase of corruption and criminalization of a daily life.

At the same time, Ukraine is going to gradually expand the policy of Peninsula blockade, trying to create enforcement mechanisms to engage Russia in the dialogue on the annexation. Furthermore, Ukraine will be working on the creation of mechanisms for establishing the communications with the population of Crimea (information disseminating channels, definition of the legal status, creation of opportunities to exercise the rights and protect the interests of the citizens in the territory of Ukraine, definition of the status of self-government bodies of the Crimean Tatar people and Crimeans on the whole, support of their activities).

Thank you for your attention