

International fight against terrorism in the context of terrorist threat and attacks in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine

Statement of Ukraine at the Special meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee with Member States and international and regional organizations on "Stemming the Flow of Foreign Terrorist Fighters" (Madrid, Spain, 28 July 2015)

Anti-terrorism activities play a central role in the UN efforts to address transnational threats to security, which have dramatically evolved and are not confined to national boundaries.

Ukraine reiterates its strong support for the UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee activities aimed at resolving the acute problems of foreign terrorist fighters, which do not have geographical limits and affect the national security interests of several countries in the world.

Our collective response should be focused on prevention of terrorism, in particular, on countering radicalization, recruitment, equipment and financing of terrorism, and addressing underlying factors that provide opportunities for terrorist groups to flourish.

Due to continuous military pressure from the Russian Federation, which has violated territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine through illegal and illegitimate annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol, Ukraine for over a year has been extremely concerned over the increased threat of terrorism, including the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, stemming from the activities of the Russian military and Russia-backed illegal armed groups in Ukraine's Donbas region. This concern has been repeatedly raised in various international fora, but until now it remains unaddressed by the Russian authorities.

The problem of thousands of Russian citizens, including Russian Don Cossacks, who have arrived into the east of Ukraine to join illegal armed groups and perpetrate crimes against the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian state continues to be highly acute. The grave crimes committed by the illegal armed groups in Donbas and beyond squarely fall under qualification of terrorist acts and terrorist activity. The same qualification such crimes receive also on the territory of the Russian Federation, prompting full scale responses, including military, of the Russian authorities.

For more than a year now we witness a massive campaign in the Russian Federation through social media, NGOs, including associations of veterans of the Afghan war, and through other channels on recruiting mercenaries for combat and terrorist activities in the east of Ukraine. The OSCE Border Observation Mission at two Russian check-points, despite severe limitations to the mandate, registers in each weekly report hundreds of military-clad individuals moving across the border with Ukraine. Let me stress in this connection that a stretch of only 40 metres is currently under OSCE monitoring out of the segment of over 400 kilometres of the Ukrainian-Russian state border that is presently out of control of Ukraine's Borderguards Service. These individuals penetrate into the Ukrainian territory in order to perpetrate, plan, participate in terrorists acts in connection with the armed conflict in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine. Despite founded grave concerns about the movements of foreign terrorist fighters and inflow of weaponry from the Russian territory, the Russian Federation ignores persistent calls on establishing the

effective border control. It is evident that this country, possessing powerful law enforcement machine, deliberately makes no effort to stop the inflow of fighters into the occupied areas of Ukraine and encourages instead manpower recruitment and transfer into the territory of Ukraine through state-controlled channels.

According to the estimates of the Ukrainian authorities, the illegal armed groups in Donbas now have around 33 thousand fighters in their ranks, with 60% of them accounting for Russia's citizens. They have been armed and trained by Russia and have at their disposal over 368 main battle tanks, 940 combat armoured vehicles, 375 pieces of artillery. These numbers do not include the relevant numbers of Russian military and their armaments present in Donbas.

The international community has witnessed the numerous terrorist acts in the East of Ukraine, in particular murdering and keeping hostages, notwithstanding the Minsk agreements on peaceful settlement of the conflict. After the crash of the civilian airplane of the Malaysian airlines on 17 July 2014, shelling of civilians as happened in January, 2015 in Volnovakha and Donetsk, massive shelling of the residential area in Mariupol, it is clear that the terrorists, sponsored by Russia, fully correspond to this definition. More than 8 thousand civilians have lost their lives as a result of terrorist`s activities on the East of Ukraine. It is also evident that Russia has discredited itself as a predictable and reliable international player and its public image is totally ruined because of its efforts on importing terrorism to Ukraine.

The Russian terrorist fighters are glorified by the Russian media and nationalist circles, as they depart to Ukraine and return back to Russia, instead of being prosecuted by the law-enforcement authorities.

On 27 January 2015 Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (the Parliament) adopted the Decree, which contains an appeal to the UN, the European Parliament, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, NATO PA, OSCE PA, to national parliaments etc. to recognise the Russian Federation as an aggressor-state. This Decree was adopted, taking into consideration, in particular, extremely large numbers of Russian citizens who act as foreign terrorist fighters in Ukraine's Donbas and are sponsored directly or indirectly by the relevant Russian authorities. Ukraine hopes that the international community will react responsibly on this appeal.

We also call on UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee to promptly undertake a thorough analysis of the phenomenon of Russian terrorist fighters, which fuel the conflict in the east of Ukraine, and present recommendations on how to counter and suppress this threat through a collective effort.

In conclusion, we reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to suppress recruitment of terrorist fighters in Russia, to stop their continuous inflow into Ukraine, to investigate and prosecute them for their criminal activities. Such measures stem not only from the imperative of implementation by Russia of its national legislation and norms of international law, but also from the commitments, undertaken by the Russian Federation in Minsk, in particular on withdrawal of foreign armed groups, fighters and mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine.