



AUSTRALIA



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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine

Statement by H.E. Tegan Brink
Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative
of Australia to the United Nations

As delivered

Mr President,

This week marks the sixth anniversary of the *Maidan* protests in Ukraine.

It is also almost six years since Crimea's annexation – an act this chamber recognised as illegal in resolution 68/262.

It is critical this Assembly keeps the situation in Ukraine – and ongoing violations of international law there – on its agenda.

Australia is deeply concerned by the 18 February attacks against Ukrainian positions in the Donbas.

We stand with our international partners in calling on the Russian Federation to use its influence to urge restraint and constructively engage in the peace process.

Australia is firmly committed to supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and we reinforce this commitment with robust sanctions.

Earlier this month, we sanctioned individuals complicit in facilitating the September 2019 so-called elections in Crimea and Sevastopol.

We are also concerned by the Russian Federation's efforts to militarise Crimea and undermine regional stability.

Like my colleagues who have spoken before me, we note with deep concern the discriminatory administration of justice and attacks on the freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of religion or belief in Crimea by Russian-backed authorities.

Mr President,

It is close to six years since 298 innocent people on Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 were killed. This included 38 people who called Australia home.

Australia remains committed to the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2166, which resolved to hold those responsible to account.

Australia's determination to establish the truth will not wane.

We are pleased that the prosecution of four suspects for their alleged role in the downing of this civilian airliner will commence on 9 March in the Netherlands.

This is a significant step towards accountability.

Mr President,

The annexation of Crimea and conflict in eastern Ukraine is having a severe impact on civilians.

The impacts fall disproportionately on vulnerable groups, particularly children, the disabled and elderly.

We welcome the agreement in December last year at the Normandy Format summit to improve humanitarian and security conditions to create a safe environment for elections in eastern Ukraine.

Australia agrees that elections in Donetsk and Luhansk can only take place under Ukrainian law and when all illegal armed forces are withdrawn.

We also welcome the return of 76 Ukrainian citizens in December 2019, following the Normandy Format summit.

This was a further sign of positive cooperation, since the return of 35 Ukrainians last September.

We regret, however, that the agreement to a full and comprehensive ceasefire by the end of 2019 did not materialise.

Australia urges all parties to guarantee unimpeded access to Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission and other international organisations.

We call on all parties to redouble efforts to resolve the conflict.