



**Statement by Viktoriya Kuvshynnykova, Deputy Director-General of the International Organizations DG of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine for the UNGA Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) on Agenda item 56 “Questions relating to information” (November 2020)**

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Ukraine commends the efforts taken by Global Communications team under the able leadership of Under-Secretary-General Flemming.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added urgency to the need to update the information policies of the United Nations. Since the beginning of the health emergency Ukraine observed the attempts to explore pandemic as a new instrument of hostile propaganda and disinformation activities both in our country and beyond.

Bot and troll factories were mobilized to produce and disseminate fake news, to generate panic and sow distrust among democratic nations. We consider these information attacks to be another element of aggressive toolbox, used against Ukraine since 2014.

We commend the initiating the “Verified” campaign, aimed at tackling the spread of fakes and misinformation that affected the public awareness of COVID-19 and thus undermined the efficiency of our common response to the pandemic. We therefore join the campaign’s call to #TakeCareBeforeYouShare to contribute to stopping misinformation from spreading.

Ukraine has also been among the majority of the UN membership that endorsed the Cross-Regional Statement on “Infodemic” in the context of COVID-19. We share the commitment to create a healthy information environment at the national, regional and global levels, in which the “infodemic” is countered by scientific, evidenced-based information and facts.

Ukraine believes that a global and systemic approach is required to tackle the fake news. It is clear that such practices threaten the United Nations values. This United Nations should comprehensively address all attempts to falsify information and to use it as a tool for undermining public peace and security. Propaganda and disinformation, as well as those engaged in these activities, should be clearly dissociated from professional journalism and journalists.

We will succeed in our efforts if freedom of expression is respected, and free, independent and pluralistic media are protected.

Ukraine remains committed to further strengthening the safe and conducive environment for free media and continues to take consistent measures to this end.

However, we remain deeply concerned over the deteriorating situation with the freedom of expression and the work of journalists in the occupied territories of Ukraine, both in Crimea and Donbas.

The recent report of the UN Secretary General on “Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine” reconfirms the absence of any positive changes in the media freedom domain. Safe environment for independent and pluralistic media remains a call by the international community, that the Occupying Power is unwilling to follow. At least 11 Crimean Tatars, illegally detained by the Russian Federation in the occupied Crimea, have been civil journalists.

We reiterate our call to immediately release all illegally detained Ukrainian citizens and to halt all violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the occupied territories of Ukraine, including in the media freedom domain.

**I thank you, Mr.Chairperson**