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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the OSCE Secretary General on the Security Situation in Ukraine

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry Kamian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 23, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to make a substantive comment in response to the information that the Secretary General provided regarding the security situation in response to the question from the EU.

Given the available information that we have, it seems that the SMM leadership made quite a prudent decision with regards to ensuring the safety and the security for the monitors, in light of the situation there.

I think it's important to keep in mind, within the context of the OSCE, our shared commitment and responsibility to doing everything that we can to ensure the safety and the wellbeing of the monitors. But equally important, we shouldn't forget that we, as participating States, gave them a mandate. And we share responsibility and accountability for ensuring that the monitors have unfettered access to carry out their mandate. And while I can't speak for my esteemed colleague from the Russian Federation – when he made reference to SMM monitors being in the barracks and asking the question: "What's the point?" – I would agree with the sentiment that, in a perfect world, our monitors would not be in barracks, or they would not be at base, but would be out carrying out their mission fully, in accordance with their mandate.

But I would argue that, if a participating State, in particular the Russian Federation, was genuinely interested in ensuring that the monitors were able to effectively and fully carry out their mandate, one very simple, straightforward way to achieve this goal would be to work constructively with the forces that it arms, trains, and equips to ensure that those monitors do indeed have safe, secure, stable conditions under which they can work. That is directly related to the substance of this organization; that is a shared, collective responsibility that we have. And in particular, it is a responsibility that the Russian Federation has.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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