



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group and the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador James S. Gilmore III
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 6, 2020

The United States welcomes Ambassador Çevik back to the Permanent Council and is pleased to welcome Ambassador Grau here today for her first formal address on the *Trilateral Contact Group* negotiations. We are grateful for both of your efforts to bring peace to Ukraine. Ambassador Çevik, we have spoken several times about the progress you are making.

The Special Monitoring Mission and the *Trilateral Contact Group* are integral tools for the work we do at the OSCE to end the Russian-fomented conflict in eastern Ukraine. Ambassador Çevik, your staff and monitors provide the unbiased information needed for the *Trilateral Contact Group* to conduct the negotiations designed to bring an end to this conflict.

Ambassador Grau, you have taken the helm at a critical moment, as *Trilateral Contact Group* discussions focus on achieving the goals laid out in the December 9 *Normandy Quartet Summit* in Paris, including the creation of three new disengagement areas and crossing points across the *Line of Contact*.

The United States does not underestimate the complexity of these discussions. For Ukraine, a sovereign state subjected to a multi-year campaign of ongoing Russian aggression, the stakes are high. Ukraine has made clear its commitment to improving conditions for people living on both sides of the *Line of Contact*. At the December 9 *Normandy Quartet Summit*, President Zelenskyy prioritized identifying three new disengagement areas and three new crossing points that would have a significant humanitarian impact, and the Ukrainian delegation at the *Trilateral Contact Group* has proposed several sites meeting these criteria. It is imperative that Russia and its proxies cease their stalling tactics at the *Trilateral Contact Group*. We must not forget that Russia and its proxies seized the Donetsk Airport, Debaltseve, and other strategic locations after they signed the September 5, 2014 Minsk Protocol and September 19, 2014 *Memorandum of Understanding on Establishment of Security Zones*.

Ambassador Grau, we encourage your efforts to reach constructive agreements while keeping in mind the difficult position from which Ukraine must negotiate, with Russian forces controlling parts of its sovereign territory.

It is sad and unfortunate if the Russian people support and condone this act of aggression against their neighboring state.

Ambassador Çevik, the United States appreciates your leadership of the Special Monitoring Mission and the important work of your team. The Special Monitoring Mission is the eyes and ears of this Permanent Council, providing us with the most accurate picture of the situation on the ground. It is imperative that participating States provide you with the resources the Mission needs to fulfil its mandate. The Mission's operations have grown since its establishment in 2014, and additional resources have become necessary.

This year, as the Special Monitoring Mission's staff has grown to meet its expanding operational requirements, the voluntary funding portion of the budget is facing a shortfall. The United States again urges all participating States to make voluntary contributions to the Special Monitoring Mission. We cannot ask so much of the Mission and then fail to provide it with the support needed to do its job, and the United States has been strong and repetitive on this matter.

Russia impedes the work of the Special Monitoring Mission by denying it access to Crimea and restricting the movement of the Monitors on the ground. According to your report, Ambassador Cevik, 96 percent of the restrictions on the SMM's movement between November 18 and January 16 occurred in areas controlled by Russia-led forces. We call on Russia to exert its authority over the forces it controls in eastern Ukraine and cease their harassment of the Mission's monitors. Doing so would fulfill Russia's commitments made in the Minsk agreements, which it recommitted to at the *Normandy Quartet Summit* in December.

Ambassador Çevik, your report details instances of civilian casualties, damage to civilian infrastructure, and jamming or small-arms fire directed at the Mission's UAV assets. Ceasefire violations continued, including in Petrivske, one of the three original disengagement areas. The United States calls on Russia to honor its commitments under ALL the Minsk agreements and fully implement an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire in eastern Ukraine.

Madam Chair, Crimea is an integral part of Ukraine, occupied by Russian forces and administered by a Russian puppet government under the false pretense of a sham referendum.

Russian proxy authorities target Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians, and others who oppose the occupation. According to monitoring by the *Crimean Tatar Resource Center*, there were 157 politically motivated detentions in 2019, 127 of which were Crimean Tatars.

Russia-occupied Crimea remains a restrictive environment for expression, including for the media. Freedom House's most recent Freedom of the Press report ranked Crimea barely above North Korea. We share *Representative on Freedom of the Media Desir's* expression of relief at the news last week that occupation authorities released Crimean journalist and *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* contributor Mykola Semena from house arrest, where he spent the past four years. We call on Russia to release all the other

Crimean journalists it has imprisoned for their work, including citizen journalists Nariman Memedeminov and Remzi Bekirov. Independent journalists in Crimea should be free to work without threat of reprisal from occupation authorities. Ambassador Çevik, the United States would welcome additional reporting from the SMM regarding the situation in Crimea, as well as the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.

The United States is concerned about Russia's militarization of Crimea. In December, the United Nations adopted a resolution that condemned Russia's occupation of Crimea and its efforts to exert control over nuclear facilities and material there. Russia has transferred nuclear-capable aircraft and missiles, weapons, ammunition, and military personnel to Ukrainian territory and increased its military presence in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, including the Kerch Strait. Russia's purported annexation of Crimea is a blatant violation of the *UN Charter*, and its militarization of the peninsula is a threat to European security and flouts Russia's commitments under the *Budapest Memorandum and the Helsinki Final Act*.

Madam Chair, as underscored last week by Secretary Pompeo's visit to Ukraine, the United States fully supports Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, including its territorial waters. We do not, nor will we ever, recognize Russia's purported annexation of Crimea. We join our European and other partners in affirming that our Minsk-related sanctions against Russia will remain in place until Russia fully implements its Minsk commitments. The separate, Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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