

PC.DEL/328/14
25 March 2014

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 990th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

20 March 2014

**In response to the address by the
Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Andrii Deshchytsia**

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished Andrii Bogdanovych,

Let me say straight away that we emphatically reject all the accusations that have been made against Russia. I should like to take advantage of your presence at this meeting to briefly set out our assessment of what has been happening in Ukraine over the last few days and weeks.

The reunification of Russia and Crimea, which had belonged to Russia since the time of Catherine the Great, is a historic occasion for us.

In strict accordance with international law and democratic procedures, the people of Crimea, through the holding of a free referendum, exercised their right to self-determination as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and numerous basic international legal instruments. Following the referendum, the Crimean people made a request to Russia for admission to the Russian Federation. Russia, as a sovereign State, agreed to this request by the people of Crimea. The corresponding Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Crimea on Admitting the Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and Establishing New Constituent Entities within the Russian Federation has been signed.

The results of the referendum speak for themselves: the overwhelming majority of the residents of Crimea took part in the vote, and the overwhelming majority also voted in favour of reunification with Russia.

Today of the 2.2 million inhabitants of the Crimean peninsula almost 1.5 million are Russians, 350,000 are Ukrainians who for the most part consider Russian to be their mother tongue, and about 290,000 to 300,000 are Crimean Tatars, a significant number of whom, as the referendum has shown, also lean towards Russia, regardless of the calls that were made to them by some people in the run-up to the referendum.

The will and the conscious choice of the people of Crimea have been exercised in full. Everyone should accept and respect this choice.

We have heard the signals being sent our way regarding the current situation, including the threat of consequences and sanctions that this decision will entail for the Russian Federation. Our Western partners simply cannot get out of the habit of dictating their will to other countries. And now they are getting very nervous because their latest geopolitical experiment has resulted in such unexpected consequences. There is a reluctance to admit that the cause of this crisis lies not with Russia but in one's own irresponsible actions.

To our great regret, throughout its years of independence, Ukraine has never really managed to overcome a constant political and State crisis. The latest exacerbation of this crisis resulted in an armed *coup d'état* in Kyiv. Whatever one's attitude towards Viktor Yanukovich, it is clear that his decision to "remove himself from his duties" was taken under the threat of assassination.

We fully understand that accumulated discontent with corruption, inefficient State management and poverty was the basis of the protest movement. But this was exploited by radical forces. They were, as it turned out, preparing a government takeover. They resorted to terror, murder and pogroms. The coup was mainly organized by nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes and anti-Semites. Unfortunately, it was precisely these forces that were helped by the representatives of the Western powers who supported the "Maidan".

We have always respected the territorial integrity of the Ukrainian State, unlike those who placed the country before the fatal dilemma of association with the European Union or the Customs Union and, in so doing, sacrificed Ukraine's unity on the altar of their political ambitions. It is they who did everything to divide the country. These actions were aimed against Russia, against Ukraine and against Eurasian integration.

For our part, we have been constantly proposing co-operation on all key issues and an endeavour, here in the OSCE and elsewhere, to establish a common economic and humanitarian space. We want our relations to be equal, open and fair.

However, our partners simply do not want to listen to us. After the disappearance of the bipolar system, the planet did not become more stable. Despite our efforts and initiatives, key international institutions have not been getting any stronger; on the contrary, they have been going downhill. This also applies to the OSCE. Our Western partners, led by the United States of America, still prefer to be guided in their practical policies not so much by international law as by the rule of the gun. They act as they please: here and there, they use force or the threat of force against sovereign States, building coalitions based on the principle: "Whoever is not with us is against us". To make such aggression look legitimate, they force the necessary resolutions out of international organizations, and if for some reason this does not work they simply ignore the United Nations Security Council and the United Nations as a whole. I shall not list all the well-known examples in this statement.

The Kosovo precedent has clearly shown that international law only counts for our Western partners if it is in their interests. I would recall that NATO forces bombed Serbia for 78 days to achieve the separation of Kosovo.

The word “aggression” has been used here. Unlike in the case of Kosovo, the use of this word with respect to Russia’s actions is completely unfounded. Russian armed forces were present in Crimea in accordance with an international treaty. Yes, we did enhance our deployment, but we did not exceed the personnel limit of our armed forces in Crimea, which is set at 25,000. There has not been a single armed confrontation in Crimea. And this despite the fact that there is a large contingent of Ukrainian military – around 22,000 fully armed men – on the peninsula. (How can one speak of the “annexation” of Crimea when the overwhelming majority of the population voted in favour of reunification with Russia in a referendum?)

The incident that occurred on 18 March resulting in the death of a Ukrainian serviceman and a member of the Crimean self-defence force was an obvious provocation. It is highly reminiscent of the events on the Maidan, when sniper fire came from the self-defence forces and the Ukrainian military. No Russian military personnel were involved in this incident, and there was no storming of a Ukrainian troop unit.

Political posturing in this matter is extremely dangerous. It helps to fuel tension at a time when there are calls in Kyiv for the further arming of militants.

The Russian Federation will take all the necessary steps to prevent a repeat of such provocative action.

What measures can be taken to de-escalate the situation?

We expect our partners to finally stop pretending that nothing alarming is happening in Ukraine and that the regime set up by radical nationalists is able to take into account the interests of all citizens.

The role of the international community should be to encourage all Ukrainians to begin a dialogue on constitutional reform, to prevent a resurgence of neo-Nazi ideology, to help Ukrainian politicians to distance themselves from ultranationalists and to stop the efforts of the latter to destabilize various regions of the country.

The Verkhovna Rada can perfectly well initiate this process by inviting all the regions of the country without exception to participate and by ensuring them an equal place at the negotiating table.

We trust, distinguished Andrii Bogdanovych, that this signal will be heard in Kyiv.

We call on all parties to desist from confrontation and embark on constructive co-operation in the interests of the entire population of Ukraine, including the south-eastern regions. In the light of the appeals made to us by the United States and European countries, we have prepared and forwarded to our partners Russian proposals as to how external assistance could be organized to facilitate the steps that need to be taken by the Ukrainians themselves to find a way out of the crisis. For that purpose, we have proposed establishing a compact support group for Ukraine composed in a manner acceptable to all Ukrainian political forces.

As for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, we are in favour of it working there. We are willing to continue the finalization of its mandate, in which it is

essential to prescribe the area of geographical responsibility as clearly as possible so as to avoid subsequent misunderstandings. We saw what vague and ambiguous formulations can lead to in the case of the bombing of Libya in 2011.

At the same time, we are looking forward to objective work in Ukraine by other missions under the auspices of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Office of the Project Co-ordinator. They should provide objective assessments of the human rights situation in Ukraine at a time when the Russian-speaking population is under direct attack.

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished Andrii Bogdanovych,

In conclusion, let me quote an excerpt from the address by the President of the Russian Federation on 18 March, a statement with which, I hope, those here are already familiar. “Do not believe those who want you to fear Russia, shouting that other regions will follow Crimea. We do not want to divide Ukraine; we do not need that.” “We want to be friends with Ukraine and we want Ukraine to be a strong, sovereign and self-sufficient country. Ukraine is one our biggest partners after all. We have many joint projects and I believe in their success no matter what the current difficulties may be. Most importantly, we want peace and harmony to prevail in Ukraine, and we are ready to work together with other countries to do everything possible to facilitate and support this. But as I said, only Ukraine’s own people can put their house in order.”

Thank you for your attention.