



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Ministerial Council
Belgrade 2015**

MC.DEC/1/15
4 December 2015

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Second day of the Twenty-Second Meeting
MC(22) Journal No. 2, Agenda item 8

**DECISION No. 1/15
TIME AND PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OSCE
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

The Ministerial Council,

Decides that the Twenty-Third Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council will be held in Hamburg on 8 and 9 December 2016.

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Attachment

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**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of the United States of America:

“The United States looks forward to next year’s Ministerial Council in Hamburg and welcomes this decision by the Ministerial Council.

As we look toward next year we must express our deep disappointment that because of the apparent unwillingness of a few participating States to join consensus on many draft decisions consistent with OSCE principles and commitments, this year’s Ministerial meeting has produced few consequential and valuable decisions.

This is principally a symptom of the ongoing security crisis in the OSCE area precipitated by the ongoing occupation of and attempted annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and its abrogation of numerous OSCE commitments and violation of international law.

The crisis in European security fomented by Russia has been reflected in our work here in Belgrade. We thank the Chairmanship for its good faith efforts to mitigate this reality.

We recall that the SMM has yet to realize its full potential, as Russia-backed separatists continue to obstruct SMM access to territory under their control, including up to the Russia/Ukraine border, and to employ violence to threaten or intimidate SMM personnel. Consequently, the SMM is not able either to monitor the ceasefire fully or verify the withdrawal of weapons – both of which are essential to the Minsk implementation process. Russia-backed separatists deprive the SMM of the security guarantees needed to open new patrol bases near the line of contact and continue to jam the organization’s UAVs.

Like many other delegations represented at this Ministerial, we supported efforts to pass a clear Declaration in support of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, with the goal of a peaceful and sustainable resolution to the conflict. That Declaration also would have affirmed the OSCE’s response to the conflict, recognizing the contributions of the three OSCE field missions and the vital work of OSCE’s independent institutions.

The reason is clear: Russia has consistently and repeatedly contravened OSCE principles and commitments enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter. It has been unwilling at this Ministerial to allow for a Declaration that accounts for the full extent of

its actions in Ukraine. We also note that the only reason the SMM was needed in the first place was because of Russia's aggression against another participating State.

We appreciate the SMM's efforts to support full implementation of the Minsk Protocol and Memorandum, and the Package of Measures. We note that Russia still has not fulfilled its commitment to free hostages and Ukrainians detained for political reasons, including Nadiya Savchenko, Oleg Sentsov, and Oleksander Kolchenko. We also repeat our call to Russia and the separatists it backs to agree to modalities for free and fair local elections in the special status area that are held under Ukrainian law, in line with OSCE standards, and monitored by ODIHR.

We recall that the SMM's mandate clearly states that 'SMM members will have safe and secure access throughout Ukraine,' which includes Crimea. The United States reaffirms its commitment to the SMM, and even more fundamentally to Ukraine's sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

I ask that this interpretive statement be attached to the decision and the journal of the day.

Thank you."