



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, Ambassador Kinnunen and the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Ambassador Yasar Halit Cevik

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 17, 2022

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ambassadors Cevik and Kinnunen, the United States welcomes you back to the Permanent Council. Your briefings today could not come at a more critical moment for the security of the entire OSCE area.

Let me start by expressing sincere gratitude to both of you for your tireless work – often at great personal cost – to bring about a peaceful resolution to the conflict that Russia fomented and still fuels in Ukraine. It is clear the SMM and the TCG play critical and complementary roles in trying to end this deadly situation; the United States appreciates the difficulty and complexity of your work and commends your efforts. Unfortunately, your skilled leadership cannot achieve peace in the absence of political will from Russia. That is because – and let’s be clear about this – Russia bears full responsibility for the ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine and only pays lip service to the Minsk agreements it so often cites and selectively quotes.

Since Russia has dedicated today’s UN Security Council session to the 7th anniversary of the Council’s endorsement of the Minsk Package of Measures, let’s look again closely at those agreements. The 2014 Minsk Protocol called for an immediate ceasefire, monitoring and verification of the ceasefire by the OSCE, and the withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine of unlawful military formations and military hardware, as well as of militants and mercenaries. The ink on that agreement had barely dried when Russia continued to escalate militarily, contrary to its commitments. Fast forward to the follow-up Memorandum of September 2014, which banned flights by combat aircraft over the security zone, required the withdrawal of all foreign mercenaries, and called for an end to all offensive operations. Again, despite signing on to both the Protocol and the Memorandum, Russia continued to flout its commitments through the actions of its proxies in eastern Ukraine.

Which leads me to the 13 points of the Minsk Package of Measures. Again, let’s review. Russia committed to an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire. Russia committed to a withdrawal of heavy weapons by both sides. Russia committed to local elections in conflict areas under Ukrainian law. Russia committed to ensure humanitarian access to conflict areas. And Russia committed to reinstate Ukraine’s control of its border.

Yet here we are. Russia has yet to fully implement a single commitment under the Minsk Package of Measures. It has not implemented an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire, it has not withdrawn heavy weapons, and it has not allowed access for effective monitoring and verification of these steps. Most importantly, it has not disarmed illegal armed groups and has not returned control of the Ukrainian side of the international border to Ukraine. At the same time, Russia, along with its proxies, has very clearly:

- o Obstructed the movements of OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) and the full implementation of the SMM's mandate throughout Ukraine.
- o Terminated the OSCE's Border Observation Mission, which the Minsk Protocol requires on a permanent basis.
- o Closed entry-exit checkpoints that are under Russia's control on the Line of Contact.
- o Implemented a "passportization" campaign that seeks to change the nationality of Ukrainian citizens while pursuing the economic integration of Ukraine's territory into Russia – all of which are contrary to the basic Minsk commitment to move toward the full social, economic, and political reintegration of the Russia-controlled parts of the Donbas with the rest of Ukraine.

And now, Russia has assembled a force of more than 150,000 troops along Ukraine's borders. Russia has moved 30,000 troops into Belarus, including special forces, short-range ballistic missiles, and anti-aircraft batteries. Russia has established field hospitals, and Russia has moved troops closer to Belarus' border with Ukraine - not away, closer. While doing so, Russia has made no effort to provide any substantive transparency or reassurance, and we see no indication Russia's buildup has stopped or slowed, despite some claims to the contrary.

Unfortunately, these actions left the United States no choice but to order the temporary withdrawal of our civilian SMM monitors. We greatly value and support the work of the SMM, but we also have a responsibility to protect the safety of our monitors. Unfortunately, Russia's lack of transparency, comprehensive preparations for combat, and refusal to even acknowledge concerns for the dangerous situation it has created, forced us to order what we hope will only be a temporary change to our posture.

Colleagues, despite what Russia would have you believe – that it is the innocent victim – Russia is not only a party to this conflict, but the clear aggressor. It has forces in Russia-controlled areas. And yet it pretends to have no involvement in the conflict by insisting Ukraine negotiate with Russia's own proxies in Donetsk and Luhansk. Russia's outrageous position has never been defensible. And now the Russian Duma's February 15 adoption of a resolution calling on President Putin to recognize the independence of the so-called "Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics" is yet another indication of Russia's lack of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its neighbor. In good faith and in the spirit of negotiation, Ukraine withdrew in January draft legislation on transitional justice. Where, I ask, is a single instance of a good will gesture from Russia? Certainly not from the Duma, whose resolution is directly contrary to

Russia's commitments in the Minsk agreements. For seven years, Ukraine has tried to negotiate in good faith. But it needs a willing partner in Russia.

So, Russia faces a familiar choice. It can choose the path of diplomacy that can lead to peace and security or the path of fomenting conflict and confrontation. We call on Russia to engage diplomatically, fulfil its commitments and cease obstructing the work of the SMM, and stop escalating tensions and pursuing its geopolitical aims with the threat of further invasion. Until this happens, the security of Ukraine, the security of Europe, and the sanctity of the rules-based international order will remain at risk. The United States and our Allies and partners are unified in our preference for constructive and serious diplomacy, including here at the OSCE. If Russia actually wants to pursue a peaceful solution as it claims, there is a clear diplomatic path forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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