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United States Mission to the OSCE

Ongoing Violations of International Law and Defiance of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation in Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Yesterday was a very sad day, and before starting the bulk of our statement I just wanted to start with a general observation that picks up on Foreign Minister Vella's closing statement in a way – which is that there is a lot of discussion in this organization about dialogue – and about the value of dialogue. The United States believes in dialogue and engagement as a central and primary approach to problem solving. Dialogue must be more than an exchange of words – it must be an exchange of words in good faith, with an intent to solve problems, and that connects credibly to action.

There are at least two kinds of dishonesty that are attacks on dialogue – and often fatal to the potential of dialogue to produce solutions. First there is dishonesty of the familiar kind – untrue statements or efforts to purposefully mislead partners. The second kind is saying that you will do something, and then failing to do so or taking a different action.

Both of these kinds of dishonesty undermine the potential of dialogue. Both of these kinds of dishonesty destroy trust. Both of these kinds of dishonesty reflect a lack of respect for dialogue partners.

Mr. Chair, as I said, we were saddened to learn of new attacks carried out by combined Russian-separatist forces on June 3 just outside of Donetsk city in Pisky, Luhanske, and Mariinka. Combined Russian-separatist forces reportedly amassed over 1,000 personnel and 20 tanks in this area. The Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) observed combined Russian-separatist forces using battle tanks, armored vehicles, artillery, multiple rocket launch rocket systems, and Grad rockets. The Ukrainian military sent a message of regret to the SMM that in order to defend themselves they would need to move weapons toward the line of contact to respond to this attack by combined Russian-separatist forces. The SMM reported that its attempts to contact several "leaders" of the so-called "Donetsk People's Republic" to facilitate a ceasefire were rebuffed. A ceasefire was eventually in place by nightfall, but the situation remains tense.

Mr. Chair, colleagues, while such a blatant attempt to change the facts on the ground in eastern Ukraine is shockingly brazen, it should not come as a complete surprise considering that Russia continues to foment instability in eastern Ukraine by providing the separatists with weapons, material, and manpower. Evidence of Russian support for the separatists is included in SMM reporting. On June 1, the SMM observed 44 tanks in DPR-controlled

territory in and around Donetsk city, and 10 tanks in so-called “Luhansk People’s Republic” (LPR) controlled territory in Luhansk city. Also on June 1, the SMM’s UAV observed 10 tanks in DPR controlled territory near Mariupol. Similar observations of tanks in DPR and LPR controlled territory were made on other days during the past week. The SMM is not the only international organization to have made such observations. In its latest report on the situation in Ukraine, the UN noted that “reports of sophisticated heavy weaponry and fighters being supplied from the Russian Federation persisted.” As we have pointed out before, thanks to massive supply of men and weapons from the Russian Federation, the separatists have a larger military force than some NATO members.

The attack by combined Russian-separatist forces outside of Donetsk city was not the only disheartening news we received yesterday. We were disappointed by the report that the Trilateral Control Group had to be postponed after a Russian walk-out over the status of the separatists. The Trilateral Contact group had arranged to have all four of its working groups meet on the same day, and then have the working group coordinators report to the Trilateral Contact Group. While the economic working group did not meet because the Russian representative did not show up, and the humanitarian working group was reportedly hung up over the separatists’ insistence that any prisoner exchange be linked to other issues, the political working group reportedly made some progress on the issue of elections, and the security working group saw a narrowing of differences over the Shyrokyne disengagement plan, heavy weapons withdrawal, and other topics. When the working groups sought to report on these developments to the Trilateral Contact Group, the meeting collapsed after Russia reportedly objected to attempts to reach a compromise that would have given separatists visibility into deliberations of the contact group of Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE.

Mr. Chair, colleagues, when Ambassador Tagliavini briefed the Permanent Council last week, the United States and other members of the Permanent Council stressed the need for the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups to address the issues they have been tasked with, and avoid needless and potentially disruptive discussions on format, rules, working methods, and representation. Russia’s insistence on focusing on the status of the separatists is to the detriment of the Trilateral Contact Group’s efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis in Ukraine, and raises questions about Russia’s commitment to the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Let’s recap what a disappointing recent two weeks we’ve had:

We’ve had Russian military captured on the territory of Ukraine;

We’ve had Russian vehicles and fighters with Russian military insignia reported in SMM reports;

We’ve had multiple open source reports of vehicles and weapons moving inside Russia toward Ukraine;

And later, we’ve had reports of similar weapons and vehicles being used by combined Russian and separatist forces inside Ukraine;

We’ve had Russian obstructionism of the Trilateral Contact Group;

We’ve had a new large-scale Russian-separatist attack on Ukraine including at Mariinka yesterday, needlessly costing more lives.

When Russia says one thing in dialogue and does another, when it claims to want peace but pursues conflict, it undermines efforts to find a political solution. The combination of

Russia's unconstructive behavior in Minsk and its ongoing participation in violent attacks in Ukraine makes it challenging for those of us who have hope – and who have hoped – for a political solution, to believe that Russia is serious.

Today, our distinguished Russian colleague will speak to us in just a moment. He will likely give lip service to the Minsk agreements again; he will call for the working groups to do their work; he will say that there are violations on the ground – maybe even offer up that both sides have committed violations. But in order for us to take these statements seriously, we have to see the Russian Federation follow through on the things it has committed to do.

Peaceful resolution of the violence in eastern Ukraine depends on the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. Russia bears direct responsibility for preventing attacks and implementing a ceasefire. Russia must release all hostages, including Nadiya Savchenko and Oleg Sentsov. Russia must fulfill its commitment to cease arming, training, and equipping separatists inside Ukraine. Russia must allow the SMM access to monitor the entire international border, and restore Ukrainian sovereignty over that border. And, finally, Russia must withdraw all Russian forces from Ukrainian territory, respect Ukraine's sovereignty, and end its occupation of Crimea.

Russia must live up to its commitments or face additional costs for its ongoing violations of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.