



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Response to Briefings by Ambassadors Apakan and Tagliavini and ODIHR Director Michael Link**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Special Permanent Council, Vienna  
February 17, 2015

I'd like to begin by thanking you for convening us today, and thanking Ambassador Apakan, Ambassador Tagliavini and Director Link for briefing us. It's very important that we can hear directly from you, particularly about the latest on the ground, and we appreciate your taking the time to share with us.

Ambassador Apakan and Ambassador Tagliavini, we've heard clearly from you today that the "Package of Measures" agreed last week at Minsk is an opportunity to jump-start the implementation of the Minsk Protocol and Agreement of last September, and as such represents the latest in a long string of opportunities to de-escalate peacefully the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. We've heard clearly from you that the Minsk Protocol and Agreement – along with President Poroshenko's peace plan – remain the framework that is the most promising recipe for de-escalation of this crisis. And we hope that the package of measures can indeed jump-start the process of implementing the Minsk agreements in full.

I stayed up late on Saturday evening to watch the live broadcast of President Poroshenko giving orders to his military commanders to cease fire when the clock struck midnight. We've seen the assessment from the SMM that the ceasefire is holding in a number of areas, but we share the assessment that the ceasefire is being violated with intense, ongoing attacks on Debaltseve, as well as a number of incidents in other locations.

I think it's important for us to remember what happened before Saturday, what happened leading up to the appointed time for the ceasefire. We know from publicly available information that a great deal of the negotiations in Minsk last week were taken up with President Poroshenko being willing to have an immediate ceasefire, and President Putin stalling and wanting some delay before the ceasefire would take effect, presumably in order to further change the facts on the ground.

Prior to the ceasefire deadline this past weekend, the Russian military deployed a large amount of artillery and multiple rocket-launcher systems around Debaltseve. We are confident that these are Russian military, not separatist systems. The Russian military also has air defense systems deployed near Debaltseve. We are also confident that these are Russian military, not separatist systems. Russian units along the border with Ukraine were preparing a large shipment of supplies to pro-Russia forces fighting in eastern Ukraine.

We also have continued to see a large volume of reporting in open sources on Russian military personnel killed in action and the subsequent return of those bodies across the border from Ukrainian territory.

This is what was happening before the ceasefire was to take effect. And now we see ongoing reports of heavy fighting going on, with attacks in and around Debaltseve continuing. Debaltseve is – to remind everyone – clearly west of the September 19 ceasefire line, so it seems obvious that the separatist attacks, and the statements affirming their intention to ignore the ceasefire with regard to this area, are aimed at changing facts on the ground. This underscores the importance of the OSCE SMM being able to get access to Debaltseve, to monitor the ceasefire – or the violations thereof.

We have heard today that Deputy Chief Monitor Hug has been working assiduously to negotiate security guarantees for the SMM to reach Debaltseve. There, too, the separatists, and the Russian participants, have not been forthcoming in offering the security guarantees that the SMM needs.

So I think it's important that we review the facts known to us now:

We know, first of all, that while Ukraine replied to Ambassador Apakan's request for information that would help the SMM plan to monitor the implementation of the package agreed last week, only one of the three other signatories has responded. The Russian Federation has failed to respond to Ambassador Apakan's letter, the so-called "LPR" has failed to respond to Ambassador Apakan's letter, only the "DPR" has responded on that side of the conflict. Ambassador Apakan, I would appreciate some clarification from you on whether you have heard anything from Russian Ambassador to Ukraine Zurabov about the Russian Federation's response or non-response to the letter, and why it isn't responding, given the numbers of fighters and weapons the Russian Federation needs to withdraw in order to be compliant with what it signed on to in Minsk last week and last year.

Second, we've seen the so-called "LPR" and "DPR" make statements that the ceasefire doesn't apply to certain areas, that they have no intention of abiding by the ceasefire.

Third, we've heard that the so-called "LPR" and "DPR" have imposed new restrictions on the freedom of movement of our OSCE monitors, the monitors that belong to all 57 countries around this table.

Fourth, we heard from Ambassador Tagliavini about the failure of the Tri-lateral Contact Group to speak with one voice to condemn the unhelpful statements from the so-called leaders of the "LPR" and "DPR."

Fifth, we know of the failure at the level of the Kremlin: President Putin has failed to come out and condemn these kinds of statements, has failed to condemn the ongoing fighting at Debaltseve.

Sixth, we know that Russia has sent another illegal convoy into Ukraine, in direct contrast to the commitments it made last week, that humanitarian assistance should be given in line with internationally accepted standards.

Seventh, Nadiya Savchenko, and many others, remain hostages. Nadiya Savchenko is a hostage held by the Russian Federation.

So while President Poroshenko has made it clear that he is ready to fully implement the package of measures and the Minsk agreements, we have a number of examples that Russia, and the separatists it backs, have failed already to take the steps that they agreed to less than a week ago.

I would like to say a bit about the SMM. I read about what the SMM is doing, and frankly, the map that Ambassador Apakan showed with the “spaghetti” lines of the patrols – I think it’s important that everybody sitting in this room takes time to reflect that those spaghetti lines are going through very heavily armed, very dangerous places. The SMM monitors are taking great personal risk, no matter how much effort we put into making sure that all safety precautions are made, there is still some risk. And they do that on behalf of peace. They demonstrate courage on behalf of peace. And what a disrespect it is – for any party – to not recognize the courage of our monitors and the work that they do on behalf of peace and to facilitate that work.

We welcome the efforts of the SMM to quickly marshal the resources and to be able to deploy to help monitor the ceasefire and the pull-back of weapons that was agreed to. We know that this is a difficult task and we appreciate their courage. We are reviewing the information that has been provided by the SMM about possible and known additional needs, and we call on everyone around the table to do our best to meet those needs so the SMM can do its job.

We continue to call on Russia, and Russia-backed separatists, to allow immediate full access for the OSCE monitors to monitor the ceasefire as agreed in Minsk.

In closing, Mr. Chair, we urge all signatories to implement the September 5<sup>th</sup> Minsk Protocol, the September 19<sup>th</sup> Memorandum agreed to in Minsk last year and reaffirmed in the Minsk Implementation Plan package on February 12. These agreements represent the best path to a lasting peace that respects Ukraine’s sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.

We also call on Russia to end its illegal occupation of Crimea and to return all hostages.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.