



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 Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Gregory Macris
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 15, 2018

The United States' position on the illegal so-called "elections" held on November 11 in Russia-controlled Donbas is clear. Moscow's actions ran afoul of Ukrainian law and contravened the letter and the spirit of the Minsk agreements. We call on Russia to disavow the results of these illegal "elections," which were nothing more than another attempt by Moscow to legitimize its proxies in Russia-controlled Donbas. The November 12 special Permanent Council meeting proved that the international community rejects this attempt by Moscow to camouflage its aggression in the region.

Two weeks ago members of this Council pressed Russia for answers regarding the Special Monitoring Mission's (SMM) long-range UAV, that was downed on October 27 over Russia-controlled territory in eastern Ukraine. We, along with the rest of this Council, have yet to hear Russia's explanation of its role in the incident that occurred in territory it controls. The October 27 downing of the UAV deprives the SMM of one of its most useful assets. The United States reaffirms its support for the SMM as the world's eyes and ears in Ukraine. We denounce all attempts to restrict the mission in its duties and remind other participating States that the SMM's mandate calls for safe and secure access throughout the entirety of Ukraine to include its internationally recognized border with Russia. The United States reiterates its call on Russia to account for the October 27 downing of the SMM's long-range UAV.

Mr. Chair, we have heard many times from Ambassadors Sajdik and Apakan that the severity of clashes and use of heavy weapons greatly increases the risks of death or maiming to civilians on both sides of the line of contact. It is therefore alarming to learn that near the Zolote disengagement area the sides have advanced their positions to a point where they are within 200 meters of one another. The Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine reported on November 9 that shrapnel from indirect fire killed a 63 year-old man near Zolote 5. In the same area, a landmine blast killed two civilians on October 18 as they tried to reestablish electrical service to their

village. Their bodies were not recovered until five days later. On November 1, an explosion occurred within 500 meters of an SMM patrol. On November 4, a separate SMM patrol had to withdraw from the Zolote after an explosion occurred less than 400 meters away. Civilians pay the price for Russia's manufactured conflict in Ukraine. These appalling conditions are the result of Russia's failure to implement an immediate and lasting ceasefire, withdraw its forces from the conflict zone, and place its proscribed weapons into storage as specified in the Minsk agreements.

Violations of the SMM's mandate continue despite its being approved by all participating States. In its November 6 weekly report, the SMM noted that its patrol routes were blocked 42 times. As usual, the vast majority of these incidents – 35 this week – occurred in Russia-controlled areas. Regrettably, the SMM's equipment is subject to restrictions as well. In the November 12 daily report, the Mission noted two separate instances in which shots were fired at its mini-UAVs when in operation. The SMM's mandate calls for safe and secure access throughout Ukraine. We urge the sides to respect the Mission's authority to travel and operate its equipment unimpeded throughout, including along the entirety of the internationally recognized border with Russia.

In addition to its aggression in eastern Ukraine, Russia contravenes OSCE principles and commitments with its occupation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and provocations in the Sea of Azov, where it harasses and obstructs international shipping bound for Ukrainian ports. Russia systematically delays ships carrying legal cargo through the Kerch Straits under the pretext of enforcing shipping regulations and fighting terrorism. Russia's actions are part of its broader campaign to undermine and destabilize Ukraine and further violate Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Mr. Chair, the situation in Crimea is deplorable. On November 8, the United States imposed financial sanctions on three individuals and nine entities that are supporting Moscow's attempt to annex the Crimean region of Ukraine into Russia or who are engaging in serious human rights abuses in furtherance of Russia's occupation or control over parts of Ukraine. These sanctions reinforce our July 25 Declaration of non-recognition of Russia's purported annexation of Crimea. The sanctions also underscore the United States' steadfast partnership with Ukraine and the European Union in opposing Russia's occupation of the peninsula and use of force to subjugate parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of eastern Ukraine.

The United States fully supports Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We do not, nor will we ever, recognize Russia's purported annexation of Crimea. We join our European and other partners in affirming that our Minsk-related sanctions against Russia will remain in place until Russia fully implements its

Minsk commitments. The separate, Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.