



United States Mission to the OSCE

Russia's Ongoing Failure to Meet its Obligations and Commitments in Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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The United States welcomes the decrease in violence resulting from the supplemental September 1 ceasefire in eastern Ukraine. We must seize this opportunity to consolidate the ceasefire, secure the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the line of contact, achieve complete access for OSCE monitors throughout Ukraine and its international borders, and allow for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to separatist-controlled territory.

In light of the ceasefire, which has largely held since September 1, we are concerned by the recent instances of Russian-separatist heavy weapons use in violation of the ceasefire, such as on September 14, when combined Russian-separatist forces used heavy weapons, killing two Ukrainian soldiers and wounding two more.

The SMM reported a sustained level of movement of military-type vehicles in separatist-controlled areas, such as trucks transporting equipment, ammunition, and armed personnel back and forth from Donetsk airport and cities along the contact line. In contrast, the SMM reported what it called the "unprecedented movement" of weapons away from the line of contact in government-controlled areas. This is a positive step taken by the Ukrainian government to de-escalate the situation. We call on Russia and the separatists to do their part and cease all attacks, and implement the heavy weapons withdrawal required by the Minsk Package of Measures.

Combined Russian-separatist forces have lowered the number of attacks across the line of control, but Russia and the separatists have not begun to honor their Minsk commitments, including allowing the OSCE SMM to fulfill its mandate in separatist-controlled areas.

Just last week, on September 12, the SMM reported that separatist forces denied the SMM access to Zholobok and delayed SMM observers at a checkpoint in Kriovsk.

Almost the entire international border remains off limits to the SMM, and the Mission still does not have free and unfettered access to all areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts under separatist control.

SMM reports contradict claims made by Russian officials that the SMM has access to nearly all separatist-controlled territory.

Mr. Chair, on August 30, the SMM reported the presence of sophisticated Russian military UAV jamming equipment in separatist-controlled territory. According to SMM reporting, jamming technology was used against SMM UAVs flying over separatist-controlled territory no less than 47 times from June through August. As we know, severe jamming caused at least

one UAV to crash. On September 1, an SMM UAV was apparently shot down over separatist-controlled territory; the SMM still has not been able to retrieve it. We note that the Russian Federation has expressed support to expand the SMM to 1,000 monitors and for the Mission to establish fixed positions, while at the same time Russia and the separatists are blocking OSCE access to large portions of separatist-held territory and the border.

Sustaining the current ceasefire requires the SMM to monitor fully both sides of the line of contact in order to build trust among the parties to the conflict. This also requires the effective use of UAVs.

The UN has reported that almost 8,000 Ukrainians have been killed and more than 17,800 injured as a result of Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine. We note that after the Normandy Format meeting on September 12, German Foreign Minister Steinmeier warned against a repeat of the humanitarian emergency that occurred last year in the region, and he announced that Normandy Format ministers will work to ensure that humanitarian relief organizations are granted full access to people in conflict areas.

We urge the Russian Federation to make this pledge possible.

Despite a one-time delivery of humanitarian aid at the end of last month by UNHCR, nearly 5,000 tons of critically needed aid remains blocked by combined Russian-separatist forces, and is gathering dust in warehouses.

We call again on the Russian Federation to take immediate steps to allow the delivery of aid to those in need in separatist-controlled areas, and for all aid to be delivered in coordination with international humanitarian organizations and in accordance with humanitarian principles and international standards, as agreed at Minsk.

It is time for Russia and the separatists to ensure a permanent, comprehensive ceasefire and move toward the election of local officials through a legitimate electoral process under Ukrainian law. Russia should therefore direct the separatists to support – without any conditions – local elections in separatist-controlled areas that are fully in keeping with Ukrainian law and international standards, and are monitored by the OSCE. This will afford the residents of separatist-controlled areas the representation of their choosing. We reiterate that we share the view of other partners that holding sham elections in separatist-controlled areas on October 18 and November 1 – or any other date – would be unacceptable and a violation of Minsk.

We look to Russia to condemn Aleksandr Zakharchenko's misguided statement yesterday suggesting that he will attempt to stage sham polls on October 18. While such an act of political theater will have no legal legitimacy or impact, it would constitute a repeated effort by Russia, through its proxies, to derail implementation of Minsk, as they did last year with similar polls.

Finally, Russia must release political prisoners and detainees, including Nadiya Savchenko, Oleg Sentsov, and Oleksander Kolchenko, as it committed to do when it signed the Minsk agreements. We call on Russia to end the ongoing abuses by occupying authorities of members of the Tatar community and of other ethnic and religious minority members. And it must end without delay its occupation of Crimea, under which Russian authorities continue to fail in their obligations as an occupying power to protect the human rights of Ukrainian citizens living there.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.