



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

### **Response to the OSCE's Chief Monitor in Ukraine, Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan, and the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office's Special Representative in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Martin Sajdik**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry R. Kamian  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
July 19, 2018

Mr. Chair, the United States welcomes Ambassador Apakan and Ambassador Sajdik back to the Permanent Council and expresses our appreciation for their reports. Mr. Chair, I would like to extend our personal appreciation to you, Ambassador Sajdik, and the three Co-Chairs for the frequency of their recent engagement with the delegations here in Vienna, for their detailed updates, and their tireless efforts, which are very much appreciated. Ambassador Apakan, let me express my appreciation for your efforts to reform the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM). Under your leadership, the SMM has grown into a professional organization of more than 1200 staff, including 700 unarmed civilian monitors who operate in the midst of an active conflict. We encourage you to continue your efforts to standardize patrol planning, reporting, and analysis; to correct gender imbalances in hiring and staffing; and to create the managerial and administrative conditions for the SMM to fulfill its mandate safely and effectively.

Ambassador Apakan, I would also like to thank you for your excellent briefing at yesterday's economic and environmental committee on the environmental threats to Ukraine. It led to an engaging discussion on these urgent issues. We welcome your idea for an environmental advisor and environmental contact points on each team. We would also like to express our profound appreciation to Deputy Chief Monitor Simkić for her dedicated and outstanding OSCE service, and for the detailed informal briefing on the Human Dimension issues yesterday. We commend you in particular for your team's focus on infrastructure and security at entry-exit checkpoints, and your deep cooperation with humanitarian groups to improve living conditions along the line of conflict.

Mr. Chair, the United States is heartened by the lower levels of ceasefire violations brought about by the July 1 harvest ceasefire recommitment, however, we share Ambassador Sajdik's cautionary note that we should not in any way characterize the lower level of recent violence as a success. Indeed, rising levels of crossfire this week reveal its fragility. While there have been many recommitments over the last four years, each one presents the opportunity to put in place the necessary conditions for a complete and permanent ceasefire – first and foremost

through the withdrawal of heavy and other proscribed weapons in compliance with the Minsk agreements. As the instigator of this conflict, Russia must demonstrate its determination to end the fighting and take the first steps. We also took note, Ambassador Apakan, that most of the weapons your Mission found to contravene the withdrawal lines were indeed found on territory under the control of Russia-led forces.

The reduction in fighting gives both sides the chance to make headway on humanitarian matters. Critical repairs are needed at the bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska. Despite the dramatic reduction in ceasefire violations, the SMM reports that fighting continues daily near the Donetsk Filtration Station. Russia-led forces continue to maintain positions across the agreed September 2014 contact line, endangering the water supply for hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian citizens. We reiterate our call on the Russian Federation – as the instigator of this conflict – to direct the forces that it arms, trains, leads, and fights alongside to fully respect the ceasefire, including at the Donetsk Filtration Station, and back the establishment of a safety zone that would respect, rather than reject, the Minsk agreements.

Ambassador Apakan, your recent report highlighted once again the all-too-real risk of an environmental disaster if chlorine gas canisters at the Filtration Station are ruptured. But this is only one potentially catastrophic environmental threat in the conflict area. Your report noted that 35 mines are flooded or in the process of being flooded. At least one of them, the Yunkom mine, could contaminate the water supply with radioactive tailings. Given the scope of the consequences, an international team of experts should examine preliminary assessments and verify the present and potential level of risk at Yunkom. In our view, this is not a political matter. This is about saving lives and staving off disaster.

The United States strongly supports the SMM and remains deeply concerned about the safety and security of the monitors and their equipment. Mr. Chair, it is bad enough that Russia-led forces bear responsibility for over 80 percent of all restrictions on the SMM. They are also responsible for 100 percent of the hostile acts the Mission experienced since the start of the year. Russia-led forces accosted unarmed SMM monitors with weapons five times and threatened them with detention once. In June, an inebriated militant forced an SMM patrol vehicle to drive over a mine-contaminated road, Russia-led forces fired warning shots at SMM monitors twice, and militants fired surface-to-air missiles at SMM long range UAVs. Mr. Chair, these were not accidents; they were missile attacks. And it remains Russia's singular responsibility to stop such incidents.

The SMM takes great caution to ensure its UAVs and patrols are not mistaken for military forces. Their vehicles are well-marked, and they appropriately notify parties of their movement. Threats and attacks constitute not only breaches of the SMM's mandate to monitor freely and safely throughout the entire territory of Ukraine, they also are clearly prohibited by the Minsk Package of Measures. We remind Russia and the forces it leads in eastern Ukraine that the SMM's mandate covers all of Ukrainian territory – including Ukraine's international borders and Crimea – and call on them to allow the SMM unrestricted access throughout eastern Ukraine. Ambassador Apakan, your written report took stock of a systematic denial of your Mission's access to border areas in Russia-controlled areas of Luhansk Oblast since February. It is time the SMM deployed its long-range UAVs to areas adjacent to the Russian border, and for the Russian Federation to welcome these flights as an opportunity to build confidence.

Ambassador Apakan, the United State shares your concern by recent press reports alleging that Russian intelligence had acquired sensitive information on your Mission. We urge you to fully investigate such allegations, and take all necessary steps to protect the Mission from any external attempt to compromise its integrity.

Mr. Chair, last week, the Russian Ambassador asked during the Permanent Council why so many participating States in this Council focus on Russia's actions in Ukraine. The reason is clear. Four years of fighting have not changed the fundamental facts. And SMM reporting proves that Russia and the forces it arms, leads, trains, and fights alongside are the greatest source of these egregious threats to safety and security of innocent Ukrainian civilians in the conflict zone. Russia started this conflict. Russia sustains it. And it is Russia that must end it. Yet, Russia has deliberately defied its Minsk commitments, undermined the SMM, and prevented progress in the Trilateral Contact Group. For these reasons, the United States will continue to hold Russia to account for its aggression against Ukraine.

Mr. Chair, 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. As Oleh Sentsov's hunger strike enters its 67<sup>th</sup> day, we renew our support for his call for Russia to release all Ukrainians it has unjustly imprisoned. Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine. The United States joins 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.

In closing, Ambassadors Apakan and Sajdik, let me assure you of the United States' full support and express our profound appreciation for your continued service. Ambassador Apakan, please also convey our strong support to the dedicated monitors and support staff who make the Mission's difficult work possible.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.