

PC.DEL/427/14

15 April 2014

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 995th (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

14 April 2014

**On the situation in Ukraine**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are grateful to you for acceding so rapidly to our request. We asked the Chairmanship to convene a special meeting of the Permanent Council about the extremely dangerous and dismaying development of the situation in south-east Ukraine.

The protest movement there is growing. Meetings and demonstrations are being held in a number of major cities – Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk, Gorlivka, Kramatorsk, Mariupol, Sloviansk and others. Kharkiv and Donetsk have over a million inhabitants, and most of the rest are large population centres with 100,000 or more inhabitants. According to statistics, both Ukrainians and Russians live there. Yesterday in Donetsk, 10,000 people took to the streets. How could this remain unnoticed? The protesters' demands are very simple: more self-government, more autonomy, recognition of Russian as an official language. The people in the south-eastern regions are outraged by the actions of the new authorities in Kyiv. They cannot put up for ever with their opinion being ignored. They are perplexed. All this spills over into protest acts.

Unfortunately, completely different voices are to be heard in the response from Kyiv. Yesterday evening the start of a counter-terrorist operation in south-east Ukraine was announced. Acting President Oleksandr Turchynov talks of the possibility of employing the armed forces of Ukraine to suppress the mass protests in the east of Ukraine. A decree was issued by acting Minister for Internal Affairs Arsen Avakov concerning the enlistment of "patriotically minded" citizens throughout the country to the ranks of a special force made up of civilian units. The Ministry of Internal Affairs is said to be willing to recruit 12,000 people. The Vostok special forces unit is already being formed in Luhansk province, precisely where the protests are taking place.

There is also concern about the information that armed units, including special forces, are being deployed to the eastern parts of the country along with detachments of the Right Sector. There was shooting yesterday in Sloviansk with dead and wounded. Some 150 Right Sector militants have been deployed there.

There is a very serious threat of armed force being used against the citizens of their own country.

The issuance of the criminal order to use the army to suppress the protests is unacceptable and could have the most tragic consequences. There is a direct threat of a civil war breaking out. A further escalation of the situation must be prevented.

The international community is called upon to demand that the authorities in Kyiv desist immediately from preparing for a war with their own people and that they comply with all of their obligations under the agreement of 21 February. There is a need to commence genuine national dialogue right away with the equal participation of all regions with a view to the implementation as rapidly as possible of far-reaching and inclusive constitutional reform.

The OSCE can make a contribution to the achievement of this goal. We call on the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Didier Burkhalter during his visit to Kyiv to urge the authorities there decisively and emphatically to stop the violent suppression of protests and to return to the path of dialogue.

We firmly believe that the witnesses to the signing of the agreement on 21 February – the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, France and Poland – should also do their bit. We hope that they have the necessary arguments and powers of persuasion to prevent the leadership in Kyiv from taking precipitate steps that could have irreversible consequences. I think that the officials in Brussels could also have something to say.

Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who has visited the east of Ukraine, was basically right in what he said about dialogue, decentralization and the willingness to search together for a way out of the impasse. I hope that the law on a local referendum, which is still to be elaborated and adopted, will grant sufficient rights to the regions. This is the direction that must be taken.

We are paying close attention to the reports by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. We expect more detailed and above all more truthful information from the observers about what is going on in the country. In the meantime, the impression is being given that the observers either fail to notice or are incapable of seeing the many signs of growing tension in south-east Ukraine. Yesterday's report of the events in Sloviansk, by the way, is a typical example of this.

We are convinced that the observers need to maintain an objective and neutral approach to their work, reflecting all of the facts, without omission or interpretation. When writing reports it is important to offer an analysis of greater depth and balance and to use more precise terminology when describing the various protest movements in Ukraine, of which there are so many.

As we have already mentioned, the work of the observers with civil society, with citizens in the streets and squares, is of vital importance. We note that this work is gradually improving, although it is not yet dynamic and systematic enough. We believe that it is also very important for the observers to respond to indications by citizens of violations of their human rights, including those posted on the Internet.

One very significant aspect of the OSCE's work in our opinion is the promotion of national dialogue, including at the regional level. This must be done actively and systematically.

For several months and particularly since 21 February, Russia has consistently called for multilateral dialogue, which might really offer a way of ending the crisis. We agreed in principle to the convening of a meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Russia, the Secretary of State of the United States of America, the High Representative of the European Union Catherine Ashton, and the acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

We very much hope and count on the meeting not being scuttled by impetuous actions. It could stimulate wide-ranging political dialogue in Ukraine and point the way to a political solution of the crisis.

Mr. Chairperson,

We are the target of many absurd accusations – including, this very day, from the ranks of the United Nations Security Council. We have provided the necessary explanations on more than one occasion, amongst other things regarding the Russian troops that were supposed to be preparing to advance suddenly across the Russian-Ukrainian border in the south-east. This is not happening.

In response to requests by our partners, inspections have been carried out and representatives of these countries invited to visit training areas. No threatening military activities of any kind have been detected there. From today until 19 April, a joint mission of the United States of America and the Czech Republic is carrying out a scheduled observation flight over Russian territory under the Treaty on Open Skies.

We have no troops, agents or intelligence officers in Ukraine. The Minister for Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov stated this clearly and distinctly today. No compelling evidence to the contrary has been presented to us, only conjecture and hearsay. Look at the photographs. If you see anything, then make a request to us to investigate it.

I should like to stress once again that Russia is not interested in escalating the crisis in Ukraine, including the situation in the south-east of the country. Ukraine is too important an economic and political partner for us and is closely allied to us in many respects.

A split within the country would be counter to the Russian Federation's fundamental interests. It is in Russia's interests for Ukraine to be a cohesive, unified and friendly country in which all inhabitants, regardless of their nationality or where they live, can regard themselves as fully fledged citizens of their country, whose interests are fully respected.

This can be achieved through far-reaching constitutional reform with the participation of all regions and through the holding on this basis of free and fair presidential, parliamentary and local elections. There is a need for more self-government, autonomy and consolidation of the status of the Russian language. These are the most important things to be done in Ukraine now.

Thank you for your attention.