



PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON RUSSIAN FIGHTERS IN UKRAINE

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 30 October 2014

Mr. Chairman,

We have heard – several times during Council meetings – our distinguished Russian colleague admit that citizens of the Russian Federation take part in armed operations in Ukraine, on the separatists’ side.

They have been referred to as “dobrovol’tsy” – volunteers. I also believe that it has been admitted that some of them are Russian soldiers, on temporary leave from their military service.

Mr Chairman,

The problem of foreign fighters is of great concern to all OSCE participating States. We all see a need to limit the number of persons that travel abroad to participate in armed conflicts, or better, to eliminate this problem altogether. Clearly, it is the situation in the Middle East that has led governments in many countries, Norway included, to look at what we can do to this effect and what legislative measures we may need to put in place.

In Norway, we have just finalized a public hearing on legislation that explores the possibility of criminalizing participation in an armed conflict.

I would like to underline that we are still in the early stages of the work on new legislation. It is still not certain what the result of the proposed amendments to the criminal law will be.

Today, Mr. Chairman, I wanted to raise the issue from a *political* rather than a *legal* angle.

I take it that we all would like to see a de-escalation of the crisis in and around Ukraine. I also take it that we all share the wish to see the Minsk ceasefire agreement fully implemented. That we want to see an end to the violence.

In order to achieve this we should *also* do whatever we can to stop the inflow of fighters into Ukraine, and to get those already in Ukraine out of the country. We should do this irrespective of what they call themselves, or what they are called by others.

Mr Chairman, I want to ask my distinguished Russian colleague to explain to us what the Russian Federation has done in order to discourage their citizens from leaving Russia to participate in military activities in another country. I would also be interested in knowing whether or not Russian authorities intend to introduce legislation that would make it illegal to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.