



United States Mission to the OSCE

Ongoing Violations of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation and the Situation in Ukraine

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires Kate Byrnes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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We have raised serious concerns regarding Russia’s ongoing violations of OSCE principles and commitments in Ukraine at each meeting of the Permanent Council over the last several months. This week is no exception: the situation in eastern Ukraine deteriorated sharply. We witnessed, and condemn, the numerous convoys consisting of tanks, artillery, multiple-launch rocket systems, and other heavy weapons crossing the international border from Russia and moving west toward the agreed ceasefire line, breaching the provisions of both the Minsk Protocol and Memorandum and violating Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Mr. Chair, we have also seen a deteriorating situation in the Donbas where ongoing shelling and fighting by Russia-backed separatists, particularly around the Donetsk airport, continue to inflict severe human casualties, and destroy infrastructure. We reiterate our grave concern over Russia’s increased militarization of the Donbas region. We note that the November 8 SMM report described one convoy of more than 40 unmarked trucks carrying personnel in green military uniforms with no insignia. On November 11, the SMM reported another convoy of 43 unmarked military trucks, some towing 120 mm howitzers and some multiple-launch rocket systems, moved towards the Donetsk city center. In addition to these latest incursions, Russia has sent six so-called “humanitarian aid convoys” without the consent of the Ukrainian government and is now preparing a seventh. Russia supported the so-called separatist elections on November 2, which contravened Ukraine’s constitution and electoral laws. Russia-backed separatists have also shot at and jammed the signals of OSCE unmanned aerial vehicles on repeated occasions.

We have seen Russia’s playbook in Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Crimea. So the question is not what Russia will try to do in eastern Ukraine. The question is what we, the international community, will seek to do to prevent yet another frozen conflict in Europe, manufactured by Russia. The Minsk Agreement was brokered under the auspices of the international community. As such, there must be consequences when Russia flouts the commitments it made and continues to destabilize its neighbor.

We have said repeatedly that if Russian authorities continue their aggressive actions and violations of international law, the costs to Russia will increase. We continue to call on President Putin to work with Ukraine and other international partners in the context of the Minsk agreements to reach a lasting resolution to the conflict.

There can be no meaningful dialogue or ceasefire until Russia removes all weapons and fighters from Ukraine and returns control of Ukraine’s international border to the rightful

authorities in Kyiv. We reiterate that this border needs to be monitored by the OSCE, and we welcome the concept paper released by the SMM that proposes a way forward. Several factors constrain the SMM from observing the border region currently under control of the illegal armed groups. We call on Russia to exert the necessary influence over the separatists it supports to provide the SMM safe and unfettered access to the region to properly execute this crucial monitoring task. We also take this opportunity to voice our support for the significant expansion of the border Observer Mission and call on Russia to support such an endeavor.

Mr. Chair, we have seen alarming reports of increasing abuses against civilians in Crimea, which remains an integral part of Ukraine. We continue to receive reports of threats and violence against, and even murders of, members of the Tatar community and those who oppose the occupation. These actions must stop. The United States does not recognize Russia's purported annexation of Crimea and we call on Russia to end its occupation of Crimea.

Mr. Chair, there is a path back to peace, but Russia's actions lead in the opposite direction. We call on Russia to implement fully the agreements it signed in Minsk. This includes upholding the ceasefire, withdrawing its weapons and forces from Ukraine, returning the international border to the sovereign control of Ukraine, and releasing all hostages.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.