



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Acting Foreign Minister of Ukraine Andrii Deshchytsia

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 20, 2014

The United States warmly welcomes Foreign Minister Deshchytsia back to the Permanent Council in his new capacity, and extends its most sincere gratitude for his stirring remarks on the situation in Ukraine. Supporting Ukraine in this period of transition is of paramount importance and remains our number one priority.

The United States condemns, in the strongest terms, Russia's illegal attempt to annex Crimea. The unquestionable violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity is not only a threat to international peace and security, but also contradicts international law. We unequivocally reject Russia's military intervention and its illegal land grab. President Obama has announced a series of measures that will continue to increase the cost for the Russian individuals and Crimean separatists responsible for violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. The sanctions our government and others have put in place send a strong message to the Russian government that there are consequences for their actions, and given Russia's continued interference in Ukraine, the United States, together with international partners, stands ready to impose further sanctions.

The United States has repeatedly said that there is a way to resolve this crisis diplomatically, from the very beginning, but that requires Russia pulling back its forces to pre-crisis positions and numbers, supporting the deployment of monitors on the ground in all parts of Ukraine, including the Crimea region, and accepting Ukraine's offer of direct dialogue. The United States, along with its partners, including participating States around this table, has repeatedly urged the Russian Federation to refrain from further use of force and to take concrete steps to de-escalate the situation. Instead, Russia continues to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and refuses to engage constructively on OSCE's assistance efforts to Ukraine. We note our disappointment that the Russian Federation, despite raising its concern on numerous occasions that Russian-speaking minorities were under threat in Crimea and in other parts of Ukraine, has repeatedly blocked consensus on an OSCE special monitoring mission and stalled the development and deployment of other OSCE mechanisms and institutions that could observe and report on minority conditions in Ukraine. In so doing, Russia has failed the OSCE as the Organization seeks to support the Ukrainian people.

Mr. Minister, it is obvious that the Russian Federation remains isolated in its unwillingness to engage on any possible solution to this crisis of its own making, and its intransigence calls into question the Russian Federation's commitment to the most fundamental OSCE principles. We stand clear in our position: Russia has fallen short of honoring its international commitments—including those at the OSCE.

I would also like to take this opportunity to note again the commitment that we all made at the Lisbon Summit in 1996. We jointly committed ourselves “not to support participating States that threaten or use force in violation of international law against the territorial integrity or political independence of any participating State.” I would note what this means to all of us around this table: no State can support Russia’s illegal action in any way without violating our own commitments under the OSCE.

We applaud the Chairmanship’s persistent efforts to explore ways in which the OSCE can support Ukraine in this period of transition. We fully echo the words of the Chairman-in-Office, President Burkhalter, who condemned the Russian Federation’s breach of fundamental OSCE commitments. We urge the Chairmanship to continue to press all OSCE members to engage fully on assistance measures.

Mr. Minister, just as we call on all OSCE participating States to support Ukraine in its period of historic transition, the United States reiterates its call on the Government of Ukraine that it make full use of the OSCE resources at its disposal and take full advantage of the opportunities that the Project Coordinator Office in Ukraine provides. As such, we applaud the approval of the National Dialogue Project and thank the team of 15 experts who are en route to Ukraine. Now more than ever, the Project Coordinator Office in Ukraine serves as a pivotal conduit through which to pursue needed assistance and reforms.

Mr. Minister, before I conclude, let me call attention to your Government’s swift actions yesterday following the reprehensible, heavy-handed bullying and physical abuse of Mr. Oleksandr Panteleymonov by members of the Svoboda party. The United States strongly condemned this incident and therefore was pleased to hear that both Prime Minister Yatsenyuk and Minister of Interior Avakov spoke out against this offense. We also applaud the timely announcement by the Prosecutor General that his office will conduct a criminal investigation of the incident. We applaud the authorities in Ukraine for taking immediate measures to protect and honor the democratic rights and freedoms of all Ukrainians.

Mr. Minister, let me assure you that the United States stands firm in its unwavering support for Ukraine. We continue to support the people of Ukraine as they strive to protect their universal rights, security, prosperity, and dignity.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.