



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 Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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I apologize if I run slightly over—we have combined comments on SMM with our broader statement in order to give one, not two statements.

The United States welcomes the unconditional release of the eight Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) monitors who had been held hostage for over a month. We are glad to hear that they all are in good condition, and we wish them and their families well. The release of the OSCE hostages is a good opportunity for all of us to reemphasize that the SMM is in Ukraine at the behest of all 57 participating States and at the invitation of the Government of Ukraine. We should also emphasize that the SMM is in Ukraine to work on behalf of all the people of Ukraine, regardless of what language they speak or what oblast they live in. The SMM is not a political project. It is a joint effort by all of us to provide meaningful, independent, and unbiased information about the situation in Ukraine.

The good news that the SMM monitors were released, however, is overshadowed by the fact that some 150 individuals, including journalists, remain illegally detained by Russian-supported separatists in eastern Ukraine. We call for the immediate release of all hostages.

We were saddened by the news of the death of journalist Anatoly Kylan, and we express our condolences to his family and colleagues. We echo the concerns expressed by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović, about the increasingly hazardous media environment in Crimea and eastern Ukraine and call on all parties to ensure the safety of journalists covering events there.

We condemn the destruction of a television tower in Slovyansk that was broadcasting Ukrainian television and radio channels to several towns and villages in the Donetsk region. This attack has taken place alongside the propaganda war by Russia and its supporters to prevent the free flow of news, information, and a range of perspectives from reaching the people and to make them more susceptible to lies and manipulation.

Our distinguished colleagues from the Russian Federation regularly use this Organization as a forum to decry the evils of aggressive nationalism. Surely it is an expression of aggressive nationalism for one state to assert that it has the authority to act militarily in the territory of another in the name of persons of similar ethnic background. We have all seen reports of

President Putin's specious defense of this idea, which has no basis in international law or OSCE commitments, at a conference of Russian ambassadors and permanent representatives on July 1. It has been reported that President Putin stated at that conference, "In Ukraine, as you may have seen, at threat were our compatriots...we clearly had no right to abandon the residents of Crimea and Sevastopol." On the contrary, Russia clearly had no right to invade a sovereign state in the name of ethnic solidarity. Moreover, the only voices that perceived any "threat" to Russian speakers have been organs of Russian government propaganda. Russia offered falsehoods and perverse contortions of international law in its failed attempt to rationalize its illegal actions. The cruel irony, of course, is that Russia's actions in Crimea as well as fomenting unrest in eastern Ukraine have caused harm to many, many Ukrainians — Russian speakers and non-Russian speakers alike. False arguments have been replaced by real crimes. Russia's abuses in occupied Crimea and ongoing destabilizing actions in eastern Ukraine are antithetical to the most fundamental OSCE commitments that Russia and all other participating States have freely adopted, from the 1975 Helsinki Final Act to the present. We condemn these actions, and reiterate that we do not accept the attempted annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. As we stated at the closing session of the Annual Security Review Conference last week, we were disappointed that Crimea was not front and center in the remarks of many speakers, as it should have been in any review of the security situation in the OSCE space over the last year. We should lose no opportunity to remind the Russian Federation that it is isolated in its illegal acts and that it must end its occupation of the Crimean region of Ukraine.

Madam Chair, we want to see a diplomatic and peaceful solution to this crisis. We support President Poroshenko's peace plan, the OSCE facilitated negotiations, and the high-level talks among Germany, France, Ukraine, and Russia.

But Ukraine has a right to defend its territory and protect its people. Ukraine implemented a seven-day unilateral ceasefire to open a window for peace. Unfortunately, the separatists did not take advantage of that opportunity. Instead, they responded with violence, even as Ukrainian forces demonstrated restraint and patience. After extending the ceasefire by three days, enduring more than 100 attacks by the Russia-supported separatists, and losing at least 28 Ukrainian service members, President Poroshenko allowed the unilateral ceasefire to expire on the evening of June 30.

At the same time, President Poroshenko has stressed his continued commitment to a peace plan which includes decentralization, the free use of the Russian language, state-assisted housing, and job creation. Yesterday he repeated his assurance that amnesty and safe passage back to Russia will be provided for separatists who disarm.

The United States and the international community again call on Russia to end its support for the separatists by halting the illegal flow of arms, fighters, and financing to them across its border with Ukraine and by allowing Ukraine to take steps to halt that flow also. Russia must also leverage its influence on the separatists to lay down their arms, return control of border checkpoints, buildings, and other sites they hold, and release all remaining hostages. Russia should also move its military forces away from Ukraine's borders. We will judge Russia's commitment to peace by its actions, not its words. Peace is still possible, but any new ceasefire must be mutual and monitored.

In coordination with allies, we will also continue working to impose further costs on Russia

should it not take immediate, meaningful steps to de-escalate the situation and genuinely facilitate a peaceful and equitable resolution to the conflict.

Mr. Chairman, we have seen time and again the extent to which Russia's actions have isolated it within the international community. As we all remember, over 100 nations voted in favor of a UN General Assembly resolution on March 27 condemning Russian actions in Crimea. Most recently, on July 1, and by a three-to-one majority, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly adopted a resolution condemning what it terms "Clear, Gross and Uncorrected Violations of Helsinki Principles by the Russian Federation" in connection to its activities in Ukraine. This resolution concluded that the Russian Federation has violated each and every one of the ten Helsinki principles, the Decalogue on which this Organization is built. We commend the Parliamentary Assembly for adopting such a powerful, clear, and significant resolution.

Thank you, Madam Chair.