



United States Mission to the OSCE

Remarks on Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to a Joint Meeting of the Forum for Security Cooperation
and the Permanent Council
Vienna, March 4, 2014

Thank you to both the Chair of the FSC and to the Swiss Chairmanship for convening this meeting. I join others in appreciating the timeliness of responding to the current situation and gathering us here today. Thank you to the previous speakers, and in particular to Ambassador Prokopchuk for your ongoing efforts to keep us apprised of the situation on the ground. The United States remains fully committed to Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and unity, and we continue to welcome your efforts to share information with us as you get it.

We have already made clear our deep, deep dismay over the Russian Federation's breach of international law and of their commitments to all of us – not just to Ukraine, but to all of us. The degree to which they have violated commitments they have made in this organization and elsewhere jeopardizes trust not only in this particular situation but over the long run, and calls into question their commitment to being responsible actors in the international system.

As we have made clear, we reject many of the rationales that have been offered as being not based on facts and not legitimate. However, among the tools that this organization has, as many have pointed out, is a range of measures to enhance transparency and dialogue. This is a regional security organization and it would be a crying shame if this regional security organization couldn't bring its tools to bear in the current crisis.

I would like to commend the Ukrainian authorities not only for their efforts to spread a message throughout Ukraine to government institutions and military actors to exercise restraint and not to give in to provocations, but also for their good-faith efforts to make use of the tools in the international system, including in this forum. The effort to engage in direct dialogue under the Vienna Document in Chapter III was invoked last Friday, and we too found the response unsatisfactory, given the coincidence of the massive Russian exercises as well as the military action taken against the sovereign territory of Ukraine. Many questions remain.

We also welcome the Ukrainian government's use of an international instrument to which we have all signed up in Chapter III Paragraph 18: to invite a monitoring mission from all other participating States. The United States will accede to this request and provide the two observers that were invited, and we strongly encourage others around this table who have not already, to do likewise. We commend those who have already acceded to this invitation.

Finally, let me just say that as terrible as the events of the last week have been, there is still an opportunity to change course, to turn around and make the forward trajectory a positive one rather than a negative one. We continue to urge the Russian Federation to return its troops to its bases and to its territory. And we continue to urge them to engage in dialogue, including by making use of the platforms for dialogue in this forum and also bilateral engagement with Ukrainian authorities.

These are the moments where the choices we make are the choices that we'll have to live with for the long run, and they can damage our reputation for decades and can set us back. There is still time to make right choices, and we urge the Russian Federation to make the right choices with respect to the current crisis in Ukraine.

Thank you.