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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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Mr. Chairman, we remain deeply concerned that separatist forces continue to hold hostage eight OSCE Special Monitoring Mission monitors that they abducted on May 26 and May 29. That's two weeks ago today, and 17 days ago today. We condemn in the strongest possible terms that these monitors were abducted and have remained as hostages for so long. We call on all OSCE participating States, including Russia, to use their influence to secure the immediate and unconditional release of these monitors, to guarantee the security of the OSCE monitoring teams as they carry out their mandate throughout Ukraine, and to denounce the use of OSCE monitors or observers as hostages.

This past week we witnessed the inauguration of Petro Poroshenko as President of Ukraine. He was elected following credible, well-run elections praised by international observers, including ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. President Poroshenko is the first president of Ukraine to win in a first round vote, having collected a majority of votes cast across the country, having come in first in every oblast. His inauguration represents a unique opportunity to make progress toward a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Ukraine. Unfortunately, Russia so far has failed to recognize Poroshenko as Ukraine's president and has continued destabilizing actions in eastern Ukraine, including support for large-scale attacks on Ukrainian government positions, border posts, and convoys in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Furthermore, it is evident that heavily armed and organized fighters from Russia, particularly from the regions of Chechnya and North Ossetia, are playing an overt role in the violence. Today, news reports contain acknowledgment by Russia of material support being channeled to separatists, and news of a visit by the so-called leader of the illegal Donetsk People's Republic, [Denis] Pushilin, to Moscow. This is not a revelation, but exposure of yet another lie to be added to the tally. Such actions subvert every good faith effort at dialogue and call into question the seriousness with which the Russian Federation engages in diplomatic discussions.

We thank the Chairmanship for responding so quickly, after the Chairman-in-Office's conversation with President Poroshenko, to dispatch Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini to Ukraine to sit with Ukrainian representative Ambassador Pavlo Klimkin and Russian representative Mikhail Zurabov to practically elaborate steps in President Poroshenko's peace plan. We noted President Putin's comment last week that he looked forward to the elaboration of President Poroshenko's peace plan. We appreciate Ambassador Tagliavini's diligent efforts.

As we continue to address Russia's violations of international law and its breaches of OSCE principles and commitments in Ukraine, the United States will continue to remind the

Permanent Council of Russia's most blatant violation: its illegal occupation of Crimea. This action placed Russia at odds with its international obligations and commitments, and isolated it from the global community, as was demonstrated in a UN General Assembly vote when one hundred countries stood up in support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and against Russia's actions.

Mr. Chair, this past weekend, I had the privilege of attending the historical inauguration of President Poroshenko in Kyiv. Along with many others, I heard President Poroshenko's crystal-clear position on Crimea, in which he correctly asserted that "Crimea is Ukrainian soil. Period." Since the beginning of Russia's military intervention in Crimea, the international community and the G7 have made it very clear to Russia that its attempted annexation of Crimea is illegal and unacceptable. We do not, and will not, accept or recognize Russia's attempted annexation and we call on Russia to reverse it.

Mr. Chairman, in his inauguration speech, President Poroshenko said that he would "become a President to preserve and strengthen the unity of Ukraine and to ensure lasting peace and guarantee reliable security." We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with President Poroshenko and the people of Ukraine as they build a unified, independent, prosperous, and democratic Ukraine, a Ukraine which includes Crimea.

I would also note the statement from the G7 countries last week. In it, they said, "We confirm the decision by G7 countries to impose sanctions on individuals and entities who have actively supported or implemented the violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and who are threatening the peace, security and stability of Ukraine. We are implementing a strict policy of non-recognition with respect to Crimea/Sevastopol, in line with UN General Assembly Resolution 68/262. We stand ready to intensify targeted sanctions and to implement significant additional restrictive measures to impose further costs on Russia should events so require."

We continue to support the excellent work the SMM is doing under trying circumstances, and we certainly welcome Ukraine's request to extend the Mission's mandate. We call on all participating States around the table to offer full support through words and actions for the SMM so it can carry out its mandate, unimpeded and across all of the territory of Ukraine, to assist the government and people of Ukraine in securing and advancing their democratic future.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.