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## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

# **Report of the Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk**

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires Elisabeth Rosenstock-Siller  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
October 28, 2021

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ambassador Varga, welcome back to the Permanent Council, though I wish it were under very different circumstances. As always, we are grateful for your and your team’s efforts. We regret the end of the Border Observation Mission (BOM)’s mandate, not only because of the quality of your work, but also because of the urgent need for continued monitoring along the Ukraine-Russia border. The BOM carried out its extremely challenging duties under exceptionally difficult conditions. And it merits noting that your team maintained an uninterrupted presence at two Border Crossing Points throughout your mandate, despite the COVID-19 pandemic conditions.

Since 2014, the Mission observed the movement of millions of persons, including many in military-style outfits, and many hundreds of thousands of vehicles. The staggering numbers you have recorded over the last seven years, however, account for only a small fraction of traffic crossing the Russia-Ukraine border.

As we know, prior to terminating your mission, Russia severely limited its geographic scope and confined monitors to specifically designated and very small locations where binoculars and cameras were prohibited. Still, the very presence of BOM monitors was an important confidence-building measure and we are sorry to see its closure.

Movement across the Russia-Ukraine border remains largely unchecked, even as Russia and its proxies restrict civilian movement across the Line of Contact and between the territories controlled by Russia's proxies themselves. It is disappointing to see that Russia has no problem supplying its proxies with weapons to continue its aggression against its sovereign neighbor but does its utmost to prevent elderly and disabled civilians from crossing the Line of Contact to retrieve their pension checks.

The United States joins the other participating States in calling for Russia to allow for permanent monitoring along the border, as it committed to in the Minsk agreements. By this, I mean observation of every single Border Crossing Point along the Russia-Ukraine border.

Ambassador Varga, you will always have the fullest support of the United States as well as its eternal gratitude. Please also express our deep appreciation to the members of your team for their dedication and efforts. We will always appreciate the BOM and its work and wish all of you well in the days to come.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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