



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Acting Chief Observer of the Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 9, 2014

The United States warmly welcomes Mr. Paul Picard to the Permanent Council. We thank you for your comprehensive report, your commitment to this Organization, and your leadership of the Observer Mission on the border between Russia and Ukraine. I think your presentation, as the chairman said, set a new standard of data-driven presentation; it was extremely informative and I really appreciate the way that you are adding to our dialogue by presenting new information in a clear way and offering your observations.

We welcome your team's reports from the Russian Checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk, which included key information about cross-border traffic flows and military movements, and reported on anomalies such as men and women crossing the checkpoints in military-style dress. Your Mission provided critical reporting on two of three Russian convoys which Russia claimed were loaded with humanitarian aid, which crossed from Russia into Ukraine without the Ukrainian government's consent, and not in accordance with ICRC procedures. We also appreciate the efforts your team made to facilitate the safe crossing of over 400 Ukrainian servicemen back into Ukraine.

Mr. Chairman, throughout the duration of this crisis, we have advocated for a peaceful, negotiated solution. Accordingly, we welcomed the September 5 Minsk Protocol that first established the ceasefire and the September 19 Minsk memorandum. As currently drafted, however, the mandate of the Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk is grossly inadequate to allow this Organization to support, monitor, and verify the implementation of the Minsk Protocol and memorandum successfully. We would welcome a draft decision both to extend and to expand the mandate of the Observer Mission at the earliest opportunity.

Indeed, I echo the words of the delegate of the European Union, but I would also remind colleagues that the delegate of the Russian Federation himself called this mission a "modest initial" step. It is time to take further steps.

As we approach the end of the Mission's current mandate on October 23 and seek the full implementation of all twelve commitments of the Minsk Protocol, we must expand the Observer Mission's mandate along the international border between Ukraine and Russia. We call on Russia to engage immediately with Ukraine and the OSCE to implement monitoring and verification of the international border as agreed in Minsk, to include restoring Ukrainian control over its side of the border, and a heavy weapons free buffer zone on either side of the

border. We urge Russia to fulfill its other Minsk commitments including: using its influence with the separatists to end ceasefire violations, withdrawing all military personnel and equipment from Ukrainian territory, and releasing all hostages, including Nadiya Savchenko.

Mr. Picard, we thank you and your team for your hard work, determination, and commitment to the OSCE. We hope to build on your work across the entirety of the international border between Ukraine and Russia.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.