

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/655/19
13 June 2019

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. DMITRY BALAKIN,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1232nd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

13 June 2019

In response to the report by Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian international vehicle checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk, György Varga

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome to the Permanent Council György Varga, Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian international vehicle checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk, which was deployed at the invitation of the Russian Federation in the wake of the Berlin Declaration of the Foreign Ministers of Russia, Germany, France and Ukraine of 2 July 2014. We should like to thank him for his detailed report to this meeting and also for the regular progress reports, which confirm the normal situation on the Russian-Ukrainian border and the absence of movements of troops, arms or military equipment.

Mr. Varga's positive assessments unfortunately contrast with the statements by a number of participating States on the need to extend the geographical and functional scope of the Observer Mission's work. Politicized appeals are being heard, based on a selective reading of the Minsk agreements and the prioritizing of border monitoring, and unjustified demands are also being made on Russia.

We should like to recall that all of the commitments under the Minsk agreements apply exclusively to the parties to the internal Ukrainian conflict, namely the authorities in Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk. The Observer Mission at the checkpoints on Russian territory was deployed in 2014 purely as a gesture of goodwill on our part. We regard attempts to interpret this differently as fundamentally disrespectful.

The reinstatement of control of the State border by the Government of Ukraine (point 9 of the Package of Measures) is closely linked with the resolution of the political aspects of the settlement (point 11). In particular, this involves constitutional reform, the permanent special status of Donbas, amnesty, and linguistic self-determination of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. All of these tasks were meant to have been completed by the end of 2015. Why this did not happen is a question for the former Ukrainian authorities. The Poroshenko regime not only failed to honour its commitments but also moved in the opposite direction. The adoption of discriminatory laws on the reintegration of Donbas, on education and on the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the State language are clearly at odds with the letter and the spirit of the Package of Measures.

In that connection, we are puzzled by the holding in the OSCE of “informal meetings on ways of increasing transparency along the Ukrainian-Russian border”. Why are there no regular meetings to discuss the entry into force of the special status of Donbas in accordance with the “Steinmeier formula”?

Mr. Chairperson,

The OSCE Observer Mission notes the large movement of vehicles and persons across the Russian-Ukrainian border. This is natural, not only because the inhabitants of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions have friends and relatives in Russia, but also because travel to our country is often the only way for them to satisfy their vital needs. The inhuman blockade imposed on Donbas in March 2017 with a view to strangling the region remains in place.

Mr. Varga,

We are gratified to note that you are carrying out your activities in full compliance with the regulations in force. We urge you to continue dealing with all practical aspects of the work of the observers in co-ordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, including the office in Rostov-on-Don.

Questions regarding privileges and immunities for observers should be dealt with through accreditation with their countries’ embassies in the Russian Federation. Some countries have already provided accreditation. We invite others to follow this example.

Thank you for your attention.