



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR TACAN İLDEM
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY
On early Presidential Elections in Ukraine
(1001st Meeting of the Permanent Council, 22 May 2014)**

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

With only a few days remaining until the Presidential elections on May 25th, we are fast approaching a critical juncture in Ukraine. The elections are of utmost importance not only for the democratic process in the country, but will certainly contribute to the efforts for bringing stability and to overcome the ongoing crisis. It is therefore essential that they be held freely and fairly, in line with international standards and our OSCE commitments. The largest-ever election monitoring mission in our Organization's history has been deployed to provide the international community with a clear picture of the proceedings, and we look forward to learning about its preliminary findings.

Next Sunday's Presidential elections will allow Ukraine to forge further ahead with its constitutional reform process. In this context we welcome the initiation and conduct of National Dialogue roundtables, of which the third was held yesterday in Mykolaiv. We deem it particularly important that this Ukraine-led and Ukraine-owned process continue as broad-based, inclusive and transparent as possible in order to take into account the concerns and aspirations of all segments of Ukrainian society. Our Organization should continue to be at the forefront of the international community's support to the Ukrainian authorities within the framework of the process of national dialogue and constitutional reform. It is also crucial for these support activities to be coordinated effectively.

In sum, a President assuming office following a free and fair popular election with a high degree of participation on the one hand and a broad-based and all-encompassing national dialogue and constitutional reform process on the other are currently the two most important elements towards the construction of tomorrow's Ukraine. And their effective interaction will yield much more than the sum of their parts.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Special Monitoring Mission, with its regular and dependable input of impartial information concerning the situation on the ground, is undoubtedly among the OSCE's most important instruments in addressing the challenge posed by the crisis in Ukraine. Let me take this opportunity to reiterate once again our strong support for the Mission with its leading role in assisting Ukrainian authorities in the implementation of the Geneva de-escalation measures. In order to fulfil its mandate, the SMM must be able to operate unhindered in all regions of Ukraine and have access to all groups of the population.

Mr. Chairperson,

Another serious issue I would like to touch upon today, taking this opportunity, is the deteriorating human rights situation in Crimea, which was highlighted in the recent reports of the joint ODIHR/HCNM Human Rights Assessment Mission and the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission, and also discussed during the informal meeting held this Monday. In this context we are particularly concerned with the repeated and increasing infringements upon the rights of minority groups such as the Crimean Tatars. I have heard what my distinguished Russian colleague has said under the previous “Current Issues” item. Nevertheless, there are certain disturbing developments I would like to draw attention to.

We are all aware of how Mr. Mustafa Kırımoglu, leader of the Crimean Tatar people, is being denied entry into his homeland of Crimea. We have witnessed the launch of an investigation against the Crimean Tatars who went to greet Mr. Kırımoglu on May 3rd, as well as the threat of dissolution and attacks against the Crimean Tatar National Assembly, the only legitimate representative body of the Crimean Tatars. The 18th of May this year marked the 70th anniversary of the Tatars’ tragic mass deportations in 1944, an event they solemnly commemorate with peaceful assemblies every year. Yet, as I also pointed out during Monday’s informal meeting, large gatherings were banned last week in Crimea and even the impromptu ceremonies which were the only events the Tatars could organize were disrupted by low-flying military helicopters. Furthermore, harassment and attacks against the Crimean Tatars continue, as illustrated by the recent detention of two journalists who were also subjected to physical abuse. We are also concerned that the illegal annexation of Crimea hampers their possibility of taking part in the Presidential elections in Ukraine.

Thank you.