



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

### **Response to Report by the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
July 7, 2016

Thank you, Ambassador Verba, for your report. The United States warmly welcomes you back to the Permanent Council.

Ukraine's future is as part of a Europe whole, free and at peace. Ukraine is in the midst of an ambitious reform process to secure this future and integrate with western institutions, and it has made significant progress in implementing wide-ranging political, economic, and social reforms. In addition to constitutional amendments on judicial reform, Ukraine has recently passed corporate governance reform to strengthen oversight over Ukraine's state-owned enterprises and pharmaceutical market.

Ukraine had made this progress despite the significant challenge of Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine and Russia's occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea, which have imposed tremendous hardship on Ukraine and its people. As a result of Russia's aggression, Ukraine must care for over 21,000 wounded persons and nearly 1.5 million internally displaced persons.

Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine has contributed to the huge growth of unexploded ordnance in the country. Already, the Project Coordinator in Ukraine (PCU) plays an indispensable role in providing assistance to Ukraine's demining agencies as they develop the capacity to map minefields and unexploded ordnance and carry out humanitarian demining. The PCU's demining project is the international community's flagship effort to enhance the capacity of Ukraine's humanitarian demining actors – both in terms of its underlying policy framework and the skills and equipment of its demining teams. We express our hope that the Rada will swiftly pass the draft law on demining, which was drawn up by the government with input from OSCE experts. We also hope the Rada will soon adopt the mine action policy framework, which the Ukrainian government authored with expert advice from the PCU.

Ambassador Verba, we wish to commend your team's work on chemical safety and security. As you are aware, 25 percent of Ukraine's chemical facilities are located in the Donbas. As part of a comprehensive review, the PCU assessed that many towns and cities near or on the contact line are at risk from the threat of chemical exposure. The PCU's project to address chemical safety and security is worthy of support from participating States. The United States hopes the project will ultimately be able to reduce the risk of a serious chemical accident in Ukraine on either side of the contact line.

Ukraine is engaged in a critical fight against corruption. The United States remains open to proposals for an expanded PCU project that enhances the work of the Office of the Prosecutor General and the National Anti-Corruption Bureau. We urge the Government of

Ukraine to work closely with the PCU to maximize its contributions to the fight against corruption and ensure they are sustainable.

Ultimately, the people of Ukraine must have a sense of ownership over the reform process if it is to reach its fullest potential. In this regard, the PCU's National Dialogue project remains timely. We appreciate the PCU's efforts in the National Dialogue to bring people together on issues of common concern in Ukraine. The PCU should be as inclusive as possible and take steps to ensure the participation of people with disabilities in the National Dialogue program. As a result of the conflict in the east, the number of people with disabilities living in Ukraine has increased considerably. The PCU should explore the use of technology – including videoconferencing and social media – to make the dialogue and its results more accessible, including in separatist-held areas.

We look forward to supporting the work undertaken by the OSCE Project Coordinator as it assists Ukraine in becoming a more democratic and prosperous society. We welcome and encourage efforts by the Government of Ukraine to streamline project approval. The default position should be one of openness.

Ambassador Verba, thanks to you and your team for your efforts at this critical time for the people of Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.