

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1008th (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 July 2014

**On the situation in Ukraine and the
continuing violations of the norms of international humanitarian law
during the punitive operation in eastern Ukraine**

Mr. Chairperson,

I will be brief in responding to previous speakers. Our actions on Ukraine and Crimea do not represent violations of Helsinki Final Act commitments. One of the most important of these commitments is recognizing the right of a people to self-determination; the right to decide their own fate. The return of Crimea to the Russian Federation took place on the basis of a voluntary plebiscite expressing the will of the vast majority of the population and without any use of force; not a single person was killed. Claims regarding military support to one of the parties to the internal Ukrainian conflict are baseless.

We share concerns regarding the extremely dangerous turn that events are taking in Ukraine. The desire to claim at every opportunity that Russia has committed mythical violations of OSCE principles on the territory of that State is entirely understandable. Someone has to be blamed for all the disasters and failures. But instead of a dozen statements, it would suffice simply, finally, to begin dialogue, and to listen to the demands of those living in south-eastern regions. It would have sufficed, back at that time, simply to fulfil the agreement of 21 February. Our transatlantic colleagues would do better to address to Kyiv their call to act rather than talk.

And the actions of Kyiv give rise to the greatest alarm and indignation. In eastern regions of Ukraine, people are dying on a daily basis. The population is having to deal with the destruction of civilian infrastructure, disruption to water supplies and transport services, rising crime and a general lack of law and order.

The work of the press remains severely obstructed. Russian television is forbidden. This makes life far easier for the Ukrainian authorities: everything that does not fit into the picture they want to paint is labelled Russian propaganda. Indeed, we hear similar things here, as well. Reports of the murder of Sergey Dolgov, a journalist who was well known in Mariupol and the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Khochu v SSSR (I Want to Go to the USSR)*, need to be verified. He disappeared on 18 June, and was taken to Dnipropetrovsk, where he died as the result of yet another interrogation.

The conflict is now directly affecting Russian territory as well. On 10 July, the Gukovo Russian border checkpoint on the Russian-Ukrainian border was again hit by artillery fire. There were around 230 refugees from Ukraine near to the checkpoint at the time of the attack. They have been evacuated to a safe location.

On 12 July at 3 a.m., a Russian border detachment that was performing border defence duties in a service vehicle was attacked with an automatic firearm in the Kuibyshev district of Rostov region. The chassis of the vehicle was damaged by the gunfire, and eight bullet holes were found in it.

On 13 July, the Ukrainian army fired explosive shells at the town of Donetsk in Rostov region. An 80-year-old Russian citizen was killed and two others were seriously wounded when a shell landed on a residential building. A murder case has been launched in relation to a shell that landed in the courtyard of a residential building in Rostov region. Unexploded shells were also found in the town. On that same day, a Ukrainian air force aircraft violated Russian airspace.

These incidents illustrate the extremely dangerous escalation of tension close to the Russian-Ukrainian border, something that could have irreversible consequences for which Ukraine will be responsible. If such provocations are repeated, we reserve the right to take all measures within the law to protect our territory and ensure the safety of Russian citizens.

Claims that the firing was allegedly carried out by insurgents will be verified by ballistics and explosives experts. We will request satellite data to precisely establish which subdivision of the Ukrainian security forces was in the area from which the shells were launched.

Given the increase in cases of attacks on Russian towns and villages from Ukrainian territory, we have taken the decision to familiarize foreign military specialists with the real state of affairs in Donetsk, Rostov region, and the border-crossing point with the same name that was struck by artillery and mortar fire from Ukrainian territory. For this purpose, we invited military attachés accredited in Moscow from 18 countries (including the United States of America, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Ukraine, China and Japan) to visit that region on 15 July.

We view this forthcoming event as yet another goodwill gesture from Russia, reaffirming our policy of openness with regard to military activity, and as one more attempt to inform a broad section of the international community of the real situation near the Russian-Ukrainian border.

We trust that our foreign colleagues who will visit the districts in Rostov region that were shelled will objectively inform their capitals of the results of their trip.

Mr. Chairperson,

Instead of rabble-rousing, what is now absolutely vital is that all efforts are made to lay the ground for a swift end to violence and the start of an inclusive and transparent nationwide dialogue in Ukraine.

In this regard, as a show of goodwill, and without first waiting for a ceasefire, we invite OSCE observers to the Donetsk and Gukovo checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border. Yesterday, Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, sent a letter to this effect to OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Didier Burkhalter. Simultaneously, we put forward a draft Permanent Council decision on the sending of observers.

It would have been possible to adopt this decision today. Unfortunately, though, the initial reaction of our Western partners demonstrates their lack of intention to adopt this decision in the near future. And this, although previously they were the first to demand concrete proof and steps towards de-escalation from Russia. Now that Russia has moved in this direction, voluntarily lifting the condition that there be a ceasefire, they are trying to artificially delay the deployment of this operation, citing technical difficulties. Clearly, what they needed was not this operation, but rather another excuse to blame Russia.

Very recently, the first report of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) on the situation in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine was released.

In the Office's assessment, there are now more than 4.5 million people in the combat zone. The agency is concerned by the steady increase in the number of internally displaced persons and refugees from eastern Ukraine. More than 113,000 people have fled to Russia, and that figure is rising every day.

OCHA predicts that there will be a major and swift increase in humanitarian requirements if the military action continues and becomes more wide-scale. The OCHA report indicates the need for urgent action, primarily from the central and regional authorities in Ukraine, to fulfil the basic needs of the population – first and foremost, in terms of water and medical assistance. The delivery and distribution of humanitarian aid to the conflict zone is hampered both by the military action and by the major limitations on the movement of the public and personnel from non-governmental organizations providing aid.

Our Western colleagues are trying to prove that the “root of the evil” and cause of all suffering and human rights violations is to be found in the actions of “pro-Russian separatists”, as they call them. This theory might be persuasive for people living in New York, Montreal and the suburbs of London, and even for those residents of Ukraine who can only watch Ukrainian television. But it is not for the people in Donetsk, Luhansk, Semenivka, Odessa and other Ukrainian towns. They remember the Maidan and burning Berkut officers, they remember those burned alive in Odessa, and they remember those shot in the streets of Mariupol. They will not forget the women blown to smithereens in front of the Luhansk administration building by air-launched rockets. They will not forget that a third of Sloviansk has been destroyed. It is unthinkable that such damage could have been wrought on a 100,000-strong city by insurgents. This is from the parallel reality so beloved of my United States colleague, where insurgents' man-portable air defence systems fly into air conditioners and Odessans burn themselves alive.

It is not imaginary Russian tanks, but real Ukrainian tanks, artillery and aviation that pose the main threat to the people. In the Luhansk area alone, Ukrainian security forces have concentrated around 100 pieces of armoured equipment. Residential districts of Donetsk and Luhansk are under constant fire.

Thank you for your attention.