

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
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AT THE 998th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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On the situation in Ukraine

Mr. Chairperson,

We are grateful to Ambassador Hidajet Biščević for his report and particularly the recommendations. They will no doubt require a certain amount of adjustment in view of the rapidly changing circumstances. But the general direction is right.

We fully agree with the conclusion that the establishment of broad inclusive national dialogue as part of the constitutional process with the participation of all political forces in Ukraine, including popular movements, is the key to the de-escalation of the crisis in that country.

We also agree that the OSCE should encourage dialogue with a view to relieving tension at the local level. This is mentioned specifically in the mandate of the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine. It is also mentioned in the Geneva statement, which calls on the SMM to play a leading role in de-escalating the situation.

We firmly believe that the OSCE should do everything in its power to de-escalate the situation, including the fostering of dialogue. Those who attempt to deny the OSCE this key function are deliberately undermining the prospects for normalization.

The President of Russia Vladimir Putin said yesterday that all conflicting parties should sit down at the negotiating table and respect the Geneva agreements. Dialogue and the search for a compromise are the main things.

Our partners complain that there is apparently no one with whom to conduct dialogue. Of course, this is the case if all the representatives of the protest movement capable of speaking as genuine leaders and of representing the interests of the people in their regions are put in prison. The authorities in Kyiv must release from prison the people whom the people of Ukraine trust and have chosen as their leaders. It is with these people that direct dialogue needs to be initiated.

The establishment of national dialogue, as already confirmed more than once in the work of the United Nations and other international organizations including the OSCE itself, is the indispensable prerequisite for the success of efforts by the international community to help settle domestic conflicts, including armed ones. It should not be forgotten that negotiations between the opposing parties, even without a formal ceasefire, played a key role in achieving peaceful settlements in El Salvador, and Guatemala and Ireland, in other words throughout the world. I would recall that it was only through dialogue and arduous negotiations that it was possible, in the final analysis, to stop the bloodshed and establish a basis for peace in the Balkans.

In each of these specific cases the international community sought suitable ways of fostering dialogue between the opposing sides. On more than one occasion, many of the people sitting in this room have emphatically called for strengthening the OSCE's mediating capacities so as to enable the Organization to settle crises by helping to set up dialogue between the sides, national reconciliation and the promotion of confidence-building measures in countries undergoing crises.

We are convinced that the situation in Ukraine should be guided by this logic. This was why Russia was in favour of including a clear provision in the Geneva statement of 17 April regarding the need for the establishment as soon as possible of national dialogue as part of a constitutional process. Only direct dialogue between the present authorities in Kyiv and representatives of the popular political movements in all parts of the country, particularly the south-east, can resolve the crisis. The OSCE, notably the Special Monitoring Mission, should provide its assistance in this process. This is one of the provisions in the mandate adopted by us on 21 March.

At Permanent Council meetings and in declamatory reports in the media some of our partners are attempting to present the facts as if the Geneva statement was about two sides – those who seized power in Kyiv on the one hand, and Russia on the other. This fails completely to gel with the real state of affairs. They are attempts to misrepresent the essence of what was agreed in Geneva and are not conducive to achieving a settlement of the crisis within Ukraine. We recall once again that the agreed de-escalation measures must be implemented by the “Ukrainian authorities and local communities” themselves, as mentioned in the statement. It would not be productive to ask the Russian Federation to do everything required of the authorities in Kyiv.

As for the calls at the highest level for implementation of the Geneva statement, we have repeatedly suggested – both before and after the meeting in Geneva – the organization of a normal, inclusive political process and constitutional reform in Ukraine. On several occasions, even before the events in Kyiv in February, we have urged our partners to resolutely condemn ultra-radicals, including movements with an overtly nationalistic character such as the Right Sector and similar groups. However, apart from the incessant demands to Moscow, also with threats of sanctions, neither we nor, more importantly, the protesting activists in the east and south-east of Ukraine who are at odds with the present authorities in Kyiv, have heard any such thing. The thrust of the criticism and the political pressure are still being aimed exclusively at those who oppose Kyiv. Meanwhile, everything that led the people of Donetsk, Luhansk and other cities to this extreme form of protest is disregarded. And yet the protest movement is spreading more and more widely every day. Take an impartial look at yesterday's events in Luhansk. It would be senseless and dangerous, above all for the leaders in Kyiv themselves, to ignore this.

Media reports give reason to speak of mass victimization of dissidents, political persecution and reprisals against all those who dare to speak out against the “Maidan” authorities. The “people’s governor of Donbas” Pavel Gubarev, who has been behind bars for almost two months, is by no means the only political prisoner of the regime in Kyiv. Incidentally, he has never held a gun in his hands. We believe that an important aspect of our joint efforts to help de-escalate the situation in Ukraine is to stop this type of political repression of dissidents.

Mr. Chairperson,

I should like to draw attention to some aspects of the electoral campaign in Ukraine. There were two candidates representing the interests of the south-east, but they are practically unable to carry out a campaign. They are subject to discrimination and attacks. A disgraceful incident occurred in Kherson involving the Ukrainian presidential candidate Mikhail Dobkin. A group of armed people, including, according to various sources, representatives of the Right Sector, Maidan and the city’s self-defence units blocked the runway at Kherson airport, forcing Dobkin to turn back and miss a meeting with voters. Another prospective presidential candidate, Oleg Tsarev, was forced to abandon his participation in the election campaign because of constant threats to his safety, rendering it impossible for him to make the concerns of south-east Ukraine known to the authorities in Kyiv.

Meanwhile ideological successors of the Waffen-SS unit Galichina were allowed to march unhindered in western Ukraine. Practically all of the Russian television stations in Ukraine are still blocked, and journalists are regularly detained or expelled. At the same time there are extremely worrying reports in the media of the increased construction of temporary detention facilities in Ukraine for thousands of people, supposedly to hold illegal migrants. There are not that many illegals in Ukraine. The question inevitably arises as to the possibility of dissident co-citizens being taken there from the south-east of the country.

All this points to the urgent need for real rather than cosmetic measures by the authorities in Kyiv to accommodate the wishes of people who also want to have mastery over their own fate. It is not talk about intentions but practical steps that are needed to establish national dialogue to rectify the situation and return it to a political setting.

There is a need for the immediate disarmament of all armed formations, particularly Right Sector militants, and the commencement as soon as possible of an inclusive constitutional process with the active participation of all regions of Ukraine leading to the adoption of a constitution acceptable to all regions of Ukraine without exception.

For our part, we intend to continue contributing to the de-escalation of the conflict in Ukraine. It is our opinion that a stop must be put to all of the violence, that any extremism should be outlawed and that illegal armed units, particularly Right Sector militants, who threaten the lives of individuals, should be disarmed.

Mr. Chairperson,

In connection with the concerns expressed by a number of delegates regarding “destabilizing training exercises” conducted by Russia at the border with Ukraine, I should like to cite the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation Sergey Shoygu. Military

exercises have indeed been carried out on Russian national territory adjacent to the border with Ukraine. This was in connection with the large concentration of forces in south-east Ukraine under the pretext of combating terrorism. The decision was announced publicly. However, as soon as the Ukrainian authorities stated that they had no intention of deploying regular military units against unarmed civilians, the Russian units were called back inside Russian territory to the places where they are permanently stationed. Nothing that occurred during these exercises posed any threat whatsoever to other countries, including Ukraine.

I should like to emphasize in addition to the statement distributed that in the light of what has been said we see even less sense in convening a joint meeting today of the Forum for Security Co-operation and Permanent Council under Chapter III of the Vienna Document.

Our efforts to deal with the detention of a group of military observers in Sloviansk will continue. Speaking yesterday in Minsk, President Putin condemned their detention and expressed the hope that this conflict would be settled and they would be able to leave the territory where they were being held without hindrance.

We intend to continue to offer the necessary support to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine.

I shall not comment on the statement by the speaker from the United States of America. It is malicious and unrefined and contains no constructive proposals whatsoever, even on the subject of national dialogue that is being discussed today. I do not therefore see any sense in it.

In conclusion, I should like once again to emphasize the need for the establishment without delay of broad national dialogue with the participation of all regions and political constituencies in Ukraine. I should also like to note that what we are hearing is but a repetition of what we heard on Monday, the day before yesterday. No new facts, no developments, no fresh ideas. As far as I am concerned, Permanent Council meetings like this do not help matters.

Thank you for your attention.