



United States Mission to the OSCE

Ongoing Violations of International Law and Defiance of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation in Ukraine

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry R. Kamian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 12, 2018

Thank you Mr. Chair.

Since the July 1 ceasefire, violations remain at low levels, but key pieces of civilian infrastructure remain at risk, most especially the Donetsk Filtration Station. Despite explicit security guarantees, the SMM observed more than 1500 ceasefire violations within a 15 kilometer radius of the Station between June 25 and July 1. We applaud the efforts of those, especially the SMM, who are facilitating the movement of employees to and from the station, but the sides can and must do more to implement a ceasefire there and end the threat to 300,000 Ukrainian citizens' drinking water.

Mr. Chair, we share the relief of less fighting in the Donbas; less fighting means fewer casualties. Unfortunately, SMM personnel and equipment remain subject to threat in eastern Ukraine. In the last week, Russia-led forces targeted the SMM's UAVs with jamming equipment and small-arms fire, directly contradicting their assurances to Chief Monitor Apakan that they would maintain a "permissive security environment" and allow the SMM to fly its UAVs unobstructed. It's worth noting, Mr. Chair, once again that the mandate of the SMM is clear. The SMM - both its personnel and its technical equipment - should be granted safe, secure, unconditional and unimpeded access, including along the Ukrainian-Russian border and in the Crimean peninsula. Russia-led forces denied SMM monitors access and impeded their mandate 13 times in the last week alone. Despite these restrictions and threats, the SMM reported evidence of a possible build-up of Russia-led forces near Buhaiivka – a site the SMM has flagged repeatedly for over two months. In addition to the already documented 29 tanks and 18 pieces of towed artillery beyond the withdrawal lines and outside designated storage areas, aerial imagery spotted 80 armored combat vehicles on July 2 that were not previously observed in the area.

Mr. Chair, Chief Monitor Apakan reminded us in his most recent visit that the true measure of this conflict is its humanitarian cost. In a testament to the cohesiveness of their communities, tens of thousands of Ukrainians cross the Line of Contact at the pedestrian bridge at Stanytsia Luhanska daily. But the repairs made in October 2017 were a temporary measure, and as other delegations have previously noted today, the bridge is deteriorating. People reported waiting times in both directions of three to four hours. On June 12, Trilateral Contact Group Coordinator for Humanitarian Issues Ambassador [Toni] Frisch made an

impassioned appeal for the sides to overcome remaining differences and agree on a stable replacement and allow construction before winter. A new structure would dramatically improve conditions, especially for the sick and elderly travelers. We urge the sides to work through the TCG to complete negotiations and allow repairs to and ultimately a replacement of the [Stanytsia Luhanska] bridge.

Mr. Chair, evidence is growing of Russia's repression in silencing independent expression on Ukraine's Crimean peninsula. At least three Crimean residents who have been subjected to politically-motivated prosecution remain on hunger strikes. Ukrainian filmmaker and activist Oleh Sentsov is now in his 60th day of a hunger strike, and will spend his 42nd birthday behind bars tomorrow; activist Volodymyr Balukh is in his 116th day. The two have been joined by activist Emir-Usein Kuku, who is now in his 17th day. They are protesting their unjust imprisonment and that of more than 60 other Ukrainians who languish in Russia-run prisons. We frequently receive reports of torture by occupation authorities and the security services. We call on Russia to release all those unjustly imprisoned, and to end its campaign to suppress dissent in Crimea.

Mr. Chair, the United States fully supports Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally-recognized borders. We do not, nor will we ever, recognize Russia's purported annexation of Crimea. Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine, and the United States joins our European and other partners in affirming that our Minsk-related sanctions against Russia will remain in place until Russia fully implements its Minsk commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.