



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 Ambassador James S. Gilmore III
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 10, 2020

During last week's Ministerial Council meeting, the participating States of this Permanent Council rightfully focused much of our attention on Russia's multi-year aggression against its sovereign neighbor, Ukraine. The Russia-led conflict in eastern Ukraine and Russia's occupation of Crimea featured prominently in a number of texts and statements. Many highlighted that the situation in eastern Ukraine and Crimea represents the most significant threat to European security since the conflict in the Balkans in the 1990s. For more than six years, Russia has fueled a conflict that has claimed 13,000 Ukrainian lives and displaced more than 1.4 million people, all in an effort to destabilize its neighbor in gross violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Russia's refusal to constructively engage on Ukraine issues at the Ministerial is representative of its larger approach to the conflict. It has now been a year since the leaders of Germany, France, Ukraine, and Russia met at the Normandy Format summit in Paris. While we are all encouraged by the lower levels of ceasefire violations since the July 27 implementation of the Additional Measures to Strengthen the Ceasefire, most of the goals set out at the Paris summit have not been fully realized.

The people of eastern Ukraine still await much-needed progress on demining, still await Russia and its proxies fully opening additional entry-exit crossing points on the Russia-controlled side of the Line of Contact, and still await the identification and establishment of new disengagement areas. Yet, Russia continues to stall negotiations in the Trilateral Contact Group even as it works to falsely portray Ukraine as the impediment to progress. As we, and others, have said on multiple occasions, it is time for Moscow to match the political will shown by Kyiv and implement its Minsk commitments.

Russia's failure to do so shapes the attitude and approach of many countries regarding the intention to Russian foreign policy as a material detriment of the Russian Federation.

On the ground in eastern Ukraine, the Special Monitoring Mission continues to document civilian casualties. Over the last month or so, the SMM reported three men killed on 30 October by an explosive device and two men injured by shelling on November 12. This was the first report of shelling resulting in civilian casualties for several months. As the SMM fulfills its mandate to report ceasefire violations and civilian casualties, Russia-led forces continue to restrict the freedom of movement of these dedicated monitors.

The Mission also continues to report incidents involving its UAVs, which are targeted by small arms fire or signal jamming. Interference with the Mission's Monitors, or its UAVS, is unacceptable; we call on Moscow to direct the forces that it arms, trains, leads, finances, and fights alongside to cease their harassment of the SMM and allow their mission to proceed unhindered, as Russia itself has previously agreed.

Russia continues to block access to Crimea for international monitoring groups, including that of the SMM. On a weekly basis, on the other hand, we learn of gross human rights abuses by Russian occupation authorities against Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians, and those who oppose the occupation. During last week's Ministerial Council meeting, we were pleased to co-sponsor with Ukraine a side event on the Crimea Platform initiative, where participating States expressed their strong support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and concerns about Russia's abuses. We condemn the December 4 raid on the home of former political prisoner and veteran of the Crimean Tatar National Movement Kazim Ametov. The raid is widely viewed as retaliation for his having sued the Russian penitentiary system service last month over the reportedly terrible conditions of the confinement in which he was held for over two years.

We remind this body that more than 90 Ukrainian political prisoners remain in Russian and Russian-occupied Crimean prisons where reports of mistreatment, abuse, and torture are widespread. We call on Russia to release all Ukrainian political prisoners, including Oleksandr Marchenko, a Donetsk native who was sentenced to 10 years in prison on November 26 based on a confession that was obtained under torture. International human rights organizations need immediate access to prisoners held in areas of eastern Ukraine under the control of Russia-led forces and Crimea. Moscow, you need to make this happen. The access must be granted.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chair.