



United States Mission to the OSCE

Ongoing Violations of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation and the Situation in Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
To the Permanent Council, Vienna
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The United States remains deeply concerned by the ongoing violence in eastern Ukraine, which has killed and wounded hundreds of people since the signing of the Minsk Protocol. The ceasefire, which serves as an important component to a lasting resolution of the crisis, continues to be strained by Russia-backed separatists. Russian military forces and equipment remain on Ukrainian territory. Additionally, Russia-backed separatists continue to launch attacks against Ukrainian forces. These destabilizing actions contravene commitments made in Minsk.

We are concerned by fighting near a Ukrainian military checkpoint in Smile and heavy shelling northeast of Mariupol that caused high casualties as reported by the Special Monitoring Mission on October 14. We strongly condemn these acts of violence. The SMM reported that "Luhansk People's Republic" forces gave an ultimatum to Ukrainian servicemen in Smile, "surrender or face attack," thereby violating Minsk commitments. An ambush by "LPR" forces left 12 Ukrainian military personnel dead. In Mariupol, the SMM was informed that at least seven people were killed and more than ten injured due to shelling. While the SMM was able to ascertain that the shells were likely launched from the east, the SMM was forced to leave the area due to concern that its members might also be hit by incoming shells. Given the importance of SMM reports on such activities that subvert Minsk Protocol and Memorandum provisions, we reiterate our call for the safe and unfettered access of SMM monitors throughout all of Ukraine.

Mr. Chair, in contrast to Russia's actions, Ukraine continues to take concrete steps to fulfill its ceasefire commitments. The Government of Ukraine has scheduled special local elections for December 7, and passed legislation on amnesty and special status for parts of Luhansk and Donetsk regions. It is time for Russia, and the separatists it backs, to fulfill without any delay all the commitments made in Minsk, including the commitment to allow the OSCE to monitor the international border.

We support the delegation of Ukraine's call for border monitoring, as an important first step toward full implementation of this Minsk commitment. We appreciate the other participating States around this table who understand the importance of expanded border monitoring along the international border as a critical provision of the Minsk Protocol.

We thank the Chairmanship for its proposal on expanding efforts on observation on the Russian side of the border. This would supplement OSCE SMM monitoring and the restoration of full Ukrainian border service control on the Ukrainian side of the border.

We call on Russia to engage immediately with Ukraine in order to provide for OSCE monitoring on the border as soon as possible, as Russia committed to do in Minsk. And thank you, Mr. Chair, for the update on the contact group activities in this regard.

Mr. Chair, as we have done before, we call on the Russia-backed separatists to end all attacks immediately. Russia must also withdraw all of its military forces and equipment from inside Ukraine and on the border, release all detainees, and end its occupation of Crimea.

Mr. Chair, we continue to voice our grave concern about the mounting reports that de facto authorities in Russia-occupied Crimea are systematically abusing Crimean Tatars, members of other religious and ethnic minorities, and those who oppose the occupation. In fact, there are reports that some 18 members of the Tatar community have disappeared recently. Last week, Eden Assanov, who has been missing since late September, was found dead at an abandoned sanitarium in Yalta, and a Crimean Tatar student, Belyal Bilyalov, was found dead this week bearing signs of torture. These acts are reprehensible. We call on the Russian occupation authorities to conduct full and transparent investigations into these brutal crimes and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Mr. Chair, we would like to highlight the upcoming Ukrainian parliamentary elections on October 26 and welcome the deployment of the OSCE's election observation mission to Ukraine. We are disappointed by the subversive actions of Russia-backed separatists who continue to interfere with the upcoming elections. We urge the Russian Federation to instruct the illegal armed groups it supports to stop interfering in the electoral process and to respect the ceasefire in order to protect election observers, including those from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and ODIHR. As ODIHR noted in its interim report of October 10, no Ukrainian elections can be conducted in Russia-occupied Crimea, and elections will likely be difficult in some election districts in Donetsk and Luhansk regions as a result of the hostile environment in these areas. We understand the Government of Ukraine is taking steps to ensure that as many residents as possible will be able to vote in these oblasts and we applaud this effort. However, the Russian occupation authorities in Crimea and the separatists in eastern Ukraine will effectively disenfranchise a significant portion of Ukraine's population, including many native Russian speakers who want a voice in the government in Kyiv.

Finally, Mr. Chair, the United States welcomes Ukraine's progress on pushing forward with reforms that can support a democratic, prosperous, united Ukraine. There is much work to be done, and the Rada took another positive step this week with votes in support of several pieces of legislation regarding anti-corruption and judicial reform.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.