



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Statement on the occasion of the farewell of Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1230th meeting of the Permanent Council,
30 May 2019

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank the Slovak Chairmanship for this opportunity to bid farewell to the SMM Chief Monitor, Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, who headed the Mission all these years since its establishment in March 2014. Ambassador E. Apakan, thank you very much for your work, your personal engagement and leadership!

At the grave moment for Ukraine and the entire OSCE region, the Government of Ukraine requested urgent deployment of the OSCE Mission with a view to establishing facts on the ground and reducing tensions immediately after Russia started military invasion of the Crimean peninsula. The Mission became an emergency OSCE response to the emergence of the worst security crisis in Europe since the end of the Cold War.

In these five years, the SMM has grown to more than 1.300 mission members with significant presence across Ukraine with the exception of the temporarily occupied Crimean peninsula. Leading this huge team of monitors and administrative staff from 44 participating States, with an annual budget of more than 100 mln. EUR, must have been a challenging task even for such experienced and skilful diplomat as Ambassador Apakan. Consensus-based character of the OSCE and numerous impediments to the SMM activities imposed by the Russian Federation in the occupied territories of Ukraine posed additional challenges, to which the Chief Monitor and his able team had to respond on the daily basis. We are grateful to Ambassador Apakan for focusing promptly the efforts of the SMM on the conflict affected area and the findings, especially those which objectively debunked Russia's denials of its direct role in the hostilities in Donbas. A lot has been achieved. Much more needs to be done to make Russia move out from Ukraine's territory.

The original aims of the Mission remain valid until now. We still need an objective information on the security, humanitarian and socio-economic situation in the Russia-occupied parts of the territory of Ukraine. We believe that implementation of the Mission's mandate to full extent, its further enhancement as well as strengthening of SMM operational activities will contribute positively to achievement of the OSCE goals. We will continue to rely upon the SMM reports until the Russian Federation stops its acts of aggression against Ukraine, withdraws its troops from Ukraine's territory and returns to the tenets of international law, including respect for the OSCE core principles and commitments, in particular territorial integrity and sovereignty of states.

We wish Ambassador Apakan every single best in his future professional and personal undertakings. We welcome a new Chief Monitor Ambassador Halit Çevik and wish him every success in the demanding position.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.