



United States Mission to the OSCE

On the so-called “elections” in Luhansk and Donetsk

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 3, 2014

The United States strongly condemns the holding of yesterday’s illegitimate, so-called local “elections” that contravene Ukraine’s laws and constitution and contradict the September 5 Minsk Protocol. Despite the uniform concern voiced by the international community over the proposed holding of these so-called elections, Russia failed to act in line with the agreement it signed less than two months ago, in order to prevent yesterday’s actions that only seek to undermine a stable, united, and prosperous Ukraine. In so doing, Russia proved that it continues to act in defiance of international law and the fundamental norms of international behavior that have underpinned peace and security in Europe for over a generation.

Mr. Chair, while the government of Ukraine and the international community have arduously sought to secure a path towards Ukraine’s stable future, in contrast Russia chose to escalate once again. Yesterday marked the initiation of yet another phase of Russia’s escalatory, intolerable, and illegal actions in Ukraine. While the Russian Federation may claim to seek a peaceful outcome in Ukraine, the commitments it signs are rendered meaningless when it conducts actions that directly undermine Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Let me be clear: The United States will not recognize these so-called elections and reaffirms that the only legitimate local elections in eastern Ukraine will be held on December 7, as prescribed by the Special Status Law signed by President Poroshenko for parts of Donetsk and Luhansk, and in keeping with the Protocol that the separatists signed with Ukraine and Russia in Minsk, on September 5.

Let’s also be clear: A piece of political theater produced by intimidation, Russian weapons, and root vegetables, does not confer legitimacy on anyone. Russia, as a signatory to Minsk, and as an instigator of the violence and conflict, should cease escalation and support implementation of Minsk, including of monitoring of the international border and real local elections consistent with Ukrainian law on December 7.

As a signatory of the Minsk Protocol, we call on Russia to join the Secretary General of the United Nations, the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, and the international community in condemning the illegitimate elections held yesterday. As President Obama stated, we also caution Russia against using any such illegitimate vote as a pretext to insert additional troops and military equipment into Ukraine, particularly in light of recent indications that the Russian military is moving forces back to the border along the separatist-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine.

Mr. Chair, we also express grave concern over the increased ceasefire violations conducted by separatists yesterday, particularly around Mariupol. I took note of Ambassador Apakan's report, which highlighted instances of separatists attacking SMM assets in exactly the area where the ceasefire violations are occurring.

We urge Russia and the separatists it backs to fulfill all of their commitments under the Minsk agreements. We reiterate the fundamental importance of safeguarding the stability of Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.