



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
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Thank you Mr. Chair.

We join other delegations in welcoming the “Harvest Ceasefire” recommitment that the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) announced on June 27. However, the SMM reports that the day after the TCG announced this ceasefire, there was a spike in violence around Svitlodarsk, leaving seven Ukrainian service members dead over a 48-hour period. While the ceasefire recommitment did not officially begin until July 1, this was not an auspicious beginning.

Mr. Chair, a lasting ceasefire, supported and enforced by all sides, is the only way to bring relief from violence. Last week, U.S. Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations Ambassador Kurt Volker took stock of the dire humanitarian situation along the Line of Contact. More than 1.5 million people remain displaced and 1.2 million live with food insecurity, in addition to facing extreme threats to environmental security and public health.

Ceasefire recommitments are a necessary precondition for peace, however, they are doomed to fail unless all forces take the steps set forth in the Minsk agreements, including withdrawing Minsk-proscribed weapons and allowing full, safe, unhindered access for the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM). As the instigator of the conflict, it is Russia’s responsibility to take the necessary steps toward meeting its Minsk commitments, and to call on the forces that it leads, arms, trains, and fights alongside to commit to, and respect, an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire.

Mr. Chair, regrettably, Russia-led forces squander opportunities to end this conflict, using the pauses to resupply. On June 29, the SMM reported that five cargo trucks carried a total of 20 pallets to a logistics base in Luhansk City to which the SMM was denied access. We must assume that if Russia were actually delivering humanitarian supplies, as the trucks’ markings claimed, it would do so in a transparent manner to avoid escalating tensions ahead of a ceasefire. But the Russia-led forces’ refusal to share even basic information about the pallets’ contents leads us to conclude that this was another cynical attempt to disguise military equipment and supplies. Regrettably, this is not an unusual occurrence.

Mr. Chair, the OSCE’s unarmed monitors in Ukraine continue to face unacceptable violations of their mandate, including restrictions on their freedom of movement and direct threats to

their physical safety and the safe functioning of their equipment. Russia-led forces denied the SMM access to facilities on 16 occasions between June 18 and 24. By contrast, Ukrainian armed forces denied access only once. Russia-led forces targeted an SMM mini-UAV with small-arms fire. Russia-led forces repeatedly jeopardize the lives of our monitors.

Let me echo the grave concern echoed by several delegations here regarding the June 22nd incident, when the lead vehicle of an SMM patrol driving eastward through Russia-controlled Petrivske drove over a well-camouflaged ditch covering a TM-62 anti-tank mine. As the six SMM monitors were determining a safe exit route, a militant armed with an AK-47 rifle approached the monitors and demanded they leave the area immediately and not drive any farther east. The SMM reported that the militant also displayed signs of intoxication. Mr. Chair, the militant's refusal to allow the patrol to travel east meant that the lead vehicle had to drive back over the mined, camouflaged ditch to leave the area, putting the patrol at grave risk.

This fighter, a member of the force Russia leads, recklessly endangered the lives of the SMM patrol. It is only through luck that the SMM did not suffer additional casualties. As my EU colleague previously noted, American paramedic Joseph Stone died when his patrol vehicle drove over a landmine. We call on Russia and the forces it arms, leads, trains, and fights alongside to investigate this egregious incident fully and punish those responsible.

Mr. Chair, the United States is appalled that Russia has once again denied the Ukrainian human rights ombudsman's requests to visit a number of Ukrainians unjustly imprisoned in Russia, including Crimean filmmaker Oleh Sentsov, who has been on a hunger strike for 54 days. A July 2 announcement by Crimean authorities that they intend to seek a second four-year prison term for Volodymyr Balukh appears to be in retaliation for his hunger strike, which is now in its 109th day. We again note our concerns about the resumption in Crimea of the practice of punitive psychiatric incarceration. Regrettably, the latest victim is Crimean Tatar blogger Nariman Memedeminov, who was ordered into 20 days of psychiatric "evaluation" on June 29 as he awaits prosecution on baseless terrorism charges. We reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to release all of the more than 60 Ukrainians it has unjustly imprisoned, to cease its campaign against Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians, and other minorities on the peninsula, and to end its occupation of Crimea.

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. 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.