



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Report by Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, Chief of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 18, 2014

The United States warmly welcomes Ambassador Apakan back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his report on a Mission that has become an example of this Organization's capacity to respond swiftly and effectively to a crisis. Allow me also to applaud your team's tireless efforts and unwavering commitment to fulfilling the Special Monitoring Mission's mandate. And thank you, really, for a terrific, very candid report today.

Ambassador Apakan, since participating States adopted and renewed the mandate of one of the OSCE's most notable missions, SMM monitors have served as the eyes and ears for people in Ukraine and around the world who demand answers and seek truth. In fulfilling your mission, you and your team have shown laudable professionalism, flexibility, creativity, and courage. The SMM was first to report objectively on the realities of the crisis in Ukraine. The SMM was instrumental in facilitating access for investigators to the site of the heinous MH17 downing. The SMM has been tapped for a role in implementing the Geneva Joint Statement and Berlin Agreement and has continued to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles and challenges to fulfill its mandate. Now, the SMM is poised to take on perhaps its most critical role yet: monitoring the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine and along the Ukraine/Russia border under the terms of the Minsk Protocol.

We thank you for the operational flexibility you have shown with your current resources. We applaud the SMM for deploying 60 monitors to the Donbas less than one week after the September 5 agreement was reached and for committing to expand the number of monitors in the region. We encourage the SMM to direct and deploy staff where they are needed most and where security conditions allow.

Each day we receive troubling reports that the fragile ceasefire is marred by violations and that Russian troops continue to reinforce separatist positions in eastern Ukraine. Your teams know all too well how serious and dangerous these threats to the ceasefire can be. We were alarmed by the report that SMM monitors traveling in two vehicles were hit by artillery fragments on the outskirts of Kirovske, and, as a result of shrapnel damage, one vehicle is no longer operational. It is unacceptable that the monitors were exposed to danger as a result of ceasefire violations.

We renew our call for Russia to implement immediately its commitments under the Minsk Protocol. Russia must withdraw its forces, weapons and equipment from Ukraine; it must work constructively to secure and respect the international border between the two countries and support border monitoring; it must ensure that all hostages are released; and it must do its

part to implement a buffer zone along both sides of the border, monitored by the OSCE. Russia must prevail on the separatists to stop violating the ceasefire and allow free and unfettered access of SMM teams across Ukraine, including Crimea, where Russia must end its occupation. Thank you for your words about the upcoming report that will include challenges to those living in the Crimean region of Ukraine.

I stated earlier that the task before you in monitoring the ceasefire is not an easy one—and while there is much hard work ahead for the SMM, there is also hard work ahead for each and every participating State around this table. The Special Monitoring Mission cannot properly undertake its role in the Minsk Protocol unless the Mission is fully expanded to its mandated 500 monitors and equipped with necessary resources, such as armored vehicles, security personnel officers, and communications equipment. We encourage the SMM to provide participating States with a list of needed equipment and resources.

As of today, the United States has contributed 26 Monitoring Officers working under the aegis of the SMM in Ukraine. The United States has also responded to the latest vacancy announcement by putting forward 50 nominees with relevant experience and expertise who are ready to deploy immediately. Additionally, we are interviewing and vetting an additional 20 candidates on an urgent basis to add to the list of U.S. nominees. We have received expressions of interest from a further 150 U.S. candidates. We continue to call on all participating States to provide the needed financial and personnel resources to ensure the success of this Mission and a peaceful outcome in Ukraine.

And I agree with you, as I have said before in this forum, that this is an opportunity to put the theory behind women, peace, and security into action. We have averaged over 40% of our monitors, and we encourage others to follow your call and provide qualified female candidates to the monitoring mission.

Ambassador Apakan, we urge you to continue relaying your needs and communicating your challenges to all participating States so that we may provide you with the support and supplies you need. We welcome the OSCE's acquisition of technical assistance equipment, such as unmanned aerial vehicles, to help monitor the ceasefire, while underscoring that no piece of equipment can replace the valuable face-to-face interactions in which the SMM monitors have proven themselves such effective interlocutors and intermediaries.

If things go well, there will be urgent needs and demands for the SMM to respond quickly. The demands on you will not diminish, and we encourage you now to continue your urgent planning and deployments, and you should brace yourself for the weeks ahead. But before concluding I want to take a moment to express our gratitude, and to honor the courage and dedication of the monitors on the ground. Many of them have left families and comfortable lives behind, and are putting themselves at some risk every day. And they do the work because they know that its important work that they do on behalf of all of us. And we honor them, and appreciate their efforts, as we appreciate those of yourself, your deputies, and your leadership team in Kyiv.

Ambassador Apakan, we thank you and your team for your hard work, determination, and unwavering commitment to the OSCE and its fundamental principles.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.