



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 Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 11, 2014

At the outset, allow me to reiterate our gratitude to the SMM monitors who have committed themselves on behalf of this Organization. We note the new security procedures the SMM leadership has put in place and commend Ambassador Apakan and his team for working hard to ensure that the monitors carry out their mandate with appropriate operating procedures and safety precautions for the difficult environment in which they work. We express our concern, however, about the report that a member of a Ukrainian military convoy fired shots in the air in the vicinity of an SMM patrol on Tuesday. While certainly much less grave than previous incidents where separatists targeted SMM patrols, or shot at UAVs, this incident underscores the vital importance of everyone ensuring the safety and security of SMM monitors.

Mr. Chair, this incident does not distract our attention from the fundamental fact that Russia's aggression in Ukraine is at the root of the crisis. As our ministers overwhelmingly made clear in Basel last week, it is incumbent upon Russia to stop violating its international legal obligations and contravening the fundamental principles and commitments of this Organization. Russia's destructive actions have led to thousands of lives lost and thousands more irreparably damaged. These actions undermine our collective security. As Secretary Kerry said in Basel, the crisis we confront is not a flaw in the principles and rules of the international system—it is the failure of the Russian Federation to abide by those principles and rules.

Last week also saw a significant anniversary. On December 5, 1994, the Russian Federation, the United States, and the United Kingdom signed the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances. In that memorandum, the signatories confirmed their obligations to respect the territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine, and to refrain from the threat or use of force against Ukraine. The Budapest Memorandum was one of the instruments that marked the end of the Cold War and a new period for Europe. Unfortunately, twenty years later, the Russian Federation is violating Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, flouting the commitments of non-aggression enshrined in the Budapest Memorandum and elsewhere.

Mr. Chair, we have said all along that there must be a political solution, and we continue to support the Minsk agreements as the basis for a sustainable resolution of the crisis in eastern Ukraine, and the Trilateral Contact Group as the best means for negotiation. In that vein, we welcome the news that Ambassador Tagliavini has agreed to continue in her role during the

Serbian Chairmanship next year. We strongly support her work and laud her past performance, given the difficulty of the task and her unceasing efforts to advance a peaceful solution.

The day of silence announced by President Poroshenko for December 9 offered yet another opportunity to kick start implementation of Minsk. We urge Russia and its proxies to end hostilities, and we thank Ambassador Tagliavini for her ongoing efforts to see that the Trilateral Contact Group of Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE can serve as a platform to support progress on Minsk implementation.

Despite the challenges, there is a way for Russia to end its isolation. As dozens of ministers did in Basel, we once again call on Russia to implement the Minsk agreements fully, including by: supporting restoration of Ukrainian sovereignty over its side of the border, supporting OSCE monitoring of the entirety of its border with Ukraine, pressing the separatists to honor the ceasefire, releasing all hostages, and repudiating the illegal so-called “elections” held on November 2. Russia must also cease funneling fighters, military equipment and materiel, including tanks, armored vehicles, and heavy artillery, to the separatists. And Russia must end the occupation of Crimea.

Russia’s taking such actions would benefit everyone – Russia, Ukraine, the participating States of the OSCE, the broader international community. No one benefits from Russia’s isolation. However, if Russia continues on its destructive path, and continues to fuel the conflict in eastern Ukraine and disregard its international obligations and commitments, it will face rising costs and greater isolation. The choice is Russia’s to make.

Mr. Chair, in closing I would like to say that the United States stands ready to work with Ukraine’s new government, as well as the President and the parliament, as they continue to implement reforms that will stabilize the economy, lay the groundwork for future growth and prosperity, strengthen democracy and the rule of law, fight corruption, and support a peaceful resolution to the conflict in parts of eastern Ukraine and Crimea.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.