

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
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AT THE 993rd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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Regarding the situation in Ukraine

Mr. Chairperson,

I should like to begin with the vote on the United Nations General Assembly resolution mentioned by previous speakers. A hundred countries voted in favour of the document whose aim is to cast doubt on the significance of the referendum in Crimea, which has already played its historic role. The document is undoubtedly confrontational and does not reflect the politico-legal situation that has developed. It is not surprising that 93 countries, including quite a few of the OSCE participating States, did not support it.

Detailed explanations regarding the deployment of units and formations of the armed forces of the Russian Federation on the border with the Ukraine were provided at yesterday's meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation. I reiterate: Russia is not carrying out any significant military activity which is subject to notification under the Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures. The crisis situation in Ukraine does not constitute grounds for ending the planned military training of the Russian armed forces. Their activity on the territory of Russia poses no threat to the security of other OSCE participating States.

As for the military equipment belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces that remains in Crimea, it is being returned, just as those military personnel who decided to continue serving in Ukraine are being returned. We cannot accept claims regarding the quality of the equipment, since we are returning it in the same condition it was left in.

Mr. Chairperson,

I now come to the item on today's agenda that I have not yet heard mentioned in the statements by our colleagues. The events in Ukraine confirm the significance of the fundamental elements of the agreement of 21 February. We have heard an appeal to the Ukrainian authorities by the heads of the foreign ministries of Germany, France and Poland, who witnessed the signing of this agreement, calling on them to ensure that its fundamental principles become part of Ukrainian policy. We consider an appeal of this kind to be constructive, although also, regrettably, somewhat belated.

It is essential for the current authorities in Kyiv to ensure the creation of representative and inclusive government structures in agreement with all the regions of Ukraine and to undertake thoroughgoing constitutional reform. The fate of the Ukrainian statehood and the prosperity and conflict-free development of the peoples of Ukraine depend on this. Now is the time when Ukrainian politicians could prove their willingness to heed the opinions of their voters by taking real action.

So far there has been very little evidence of real progress in resolving this issue. It is already about a month since the Ukrainian Parliament adopted the decision “on the creation of a temporary special commission of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to prepare a draft law on amending the Ukrainian Constitution”. If work on reforming the Constitution has in fact commenced, it is taking place behind closed doors, without proper media coverage or wide-ranging consultation, including with independent experts and community organizations.

I should like to say a few words about the commission which is developing amendments to the law on language. The Party of Regions was forced to leave the commission. Not one of its suggestions regarding the status of the Russian language was accepted. Yet the commission is considering amendments by Oleh Tyahnybok’s Svoboda Party regarding various penalties for misdemeanours associated with the use of a language other than the State language, that is, Ukrainian. Some of the amendments provide for penalties of up to seven years’ imprisonment.

A thorough investigation of the human rights violations in Ukraine is necessary, the disarming of illegal formations should be accelerated and the current leaders in Kyiv should distance themselves from extremists.

We know of many cases of militants from various units coming to the homes of Russian-speaking officials, teachers and academics and forcing them to sign statements renouncing their own views under threat of torture.

We have recently observed a few indications that Ukraine is beginning to change its attitude to extremist movements. This is a positive sign.

The measures being taken to disarm militants should be consistent and decisive and not confined to isolated acts. It continues to be a matter for concern that, as far as we are aware, the leader of this group, Dmytro Yarosh, has been registered as a “Ukrainian presidential candidate”.

It is our understanding that the so-called “Maidan self-defence” battalions have not been disarmed either.

We hope that the assurances by the Ukrainian side that there are no foreign private military companies on the territory of Ukraine reflect the real state of affairs.

As for the efforts by the authorities to restore the State monopoly on the use of force, we drew attention to the Batkivshchyna Party’s draft law “on the preventive detention” of persons who could threaten the national interests of the State and society as well as its territorial integrity. We wonder whether the experts from the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) who were in Ukraine as part of the Human Rights

Assessment Mission familiarized themselves with this document. Is this the reaction of human rights activists and the international community?

We shall pass on the suggestions made by the distinguished Ambassador of Ukraine.

We welcome the deployment of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and hope it is able to deal with its task of acting objectively and impartially. We also await information from the other OSCE presences in Ukraine, the experts from the ODIHR and the High Commissioner on National Minorities regarding their assessment of the human rights situation, and the National Dialogue Project in Ukraine, which is operating under the auspices of the Office of the Project Co-ordinator in Kyiv.

I should like to say a few words in conclusion.

My colleague from the United States of America took the liberty of calling the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs “Absurdistan” in his Twitter feed following the publication of a statement explaining our view of the reasons for Crimea and Sevastopol leaving Ukraine as a result of the referendum. We have taken note of this. We note that this is by no means the first attack via Twitter and in his statements opposing the Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. In our view, this tabloid language is not in keeping with the standards of diplomatic intercourse. Nor are these utterances of our United States colleague compatible with ethical professional behaviour. We do not allow ourselves to do anything of this kind with regard to the Administration and the Department of State of the United States of America.

In this regard, I should like to call once again on our partners, if they genuinely wish to help Ukraine, to stop engaging in “Twitter rhetoric” and making empty statements and to put aside clichés and appeals to Russia not to do something it is not even doing and has no intention of doing. Incidentally, in a telephone conversation yesterday, Secretary of State John Kerry himself proposed a de-escalation of the rhetoric.

Thank you for your attention.