

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY RUDENKO,  
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1013th (SPECIAL) MEETING OF  
THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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**On the situation in Ukraine and the  
continuing violations of the norms of international humanitarian law  
during the punitive operation in eastern Ukraine**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are appreciative of the efforts the OSCE Chairmanship and Secretariat are undertaking within their authority to help alleviate the situation in Donbas, which has already turned into a humanitarian disaster. This has also been documented in the numerous reports by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), which has at last begun to pay more attention to this burning issue. The reports mention the growing number of casualties and the destruction and shelling of cities, towns and civilian infrastructure.

The OSCE observers have done much to safeguard the work of international experts at the Malaysia Airlines crash site. Unfortunately, the Ukrainian authorities are stepping up combat operations in the area and are thus directly impeding the international investigation. We should like to hear a response from our colleagues, particularly from the countries directly involved in the investigation, to these attempts to drag out and even hinder the establishment of the true causes of the tragedy. Our questions addressed to the SMM as to who is to blame for the fact that international experts have stopped work at the Boeing crash site have never been answered.

The fact that the OSCE observers have started their work at the Russian border checkpoints at Gukovo and Donetsk is in our opinion an important step towards building trust and dispelling various myths. No movements of Russian armaments or mysterious mercenaries have been observed. On the contrary, the observers' reports confirm what we have been saying for months and what our Ukrainian and United States colleagues refused to see – the growing number of forced migrants from Donbas heading for Russian territory. Russia is accepting almost five times as many civilians fleeing the punitive military operation as Ukraine. As of 8 August, according to Russia's Federal Migration Service, their number exceeded 800,000 persons (821,087). According to data from the relevant United Nations structures, the number includes over 188,000 persons who have applied for refugee status, temporary asylum or some other official status. I might add that Ukrainian soldiers are also

crossing into Russian territory. They are provided with temporary accommodation, food and medical treatment, and sent home in accordance with their wishes.

We support the efforts of the Trilateral Contact Group, whose participants include OSCE representatives. We trust that the Group's work will result in agreements on a ceasefire and on the launch of a political negotiation process.

Mr. Chairperson,

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has published another report assessing the humanitarian situation, which paints a dire picture: thousands killed and wounded, no electricity and drinking water, and the inability to secure the operation of hospitals, nursing homes and other social infrastructure facilities.

The latest data from the United Nations shows that over the past two weeks the number of victims of the conflict in Ukraine has almost doubled and now stands at 2,086. As of 13 August, almost 5,000 people had been injured. The figures are acknowledged as very conservative estimates, with the actual number being considerably higher.

The massive and indiscriminate use of heavy armaments and air force by the Ukrainian security forces against towns and villages in Donbas is impossible to conceal. Reports on this are also leaking to the Western press and into the reports of human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch. The report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights makes it clear that the majority of victims, contrary to statements by the Ukrainian leadership, were injured as a result of the intensive shelling of towns and villages.

All this clearly demonstrates that the main cause of people's suffering in eastern Ukraine is in fact the actions of the Ukrainian authorities, who sent the army and punitive battalions, hired by oligarchs, to crush those who objected to Kyiv's policy. It is absurd and cynical to claim that the cutting off of electricity, gas and water and the blocking of food supplies are the actions of those who defend the cities and towns and not of those who shell them.

Yesterday's report by the SMM has shed some light on the activities of what are known as volunteer battalions, which have resorted with a vengeance to the practice of illegally detaining people on suspicion of being sympathetic to the militias. All of this is taking place at "filtration checkpoints".

There are also a growing number of casualties amongst the Ukrainian armed forces, whose servicemen include many ordinary citizens who have been misled by the propaganda about external aggression. Instead of defending the motherland from mythical "Chechen militants" and foreign mercenaries, they are forced to fight against citizens of Ukraine like themselves. There is growing protest across the country, including in its western territories (and this has been mentioned in the SMM reports as well), against forced mobilization in the Ukrainian armed forces.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has acknowledged the obvious fact that the conflict in Ukraine is a non-international internal armed conflict, which

automatically places the obligations under international humanitarian law, particularly with respect to methods of warfare, on all sides.

It is high time for people to come to their senses and stop stoking Kyiv's aggressive stance by stovepiping anti-Russian propaganda and further supporting Kyiv in its punitive operation, which is resulting in numerous casualties and suffering amongst the inhabitants of eastern Ukraine. The punitive operation needs to be stopped immediately, and real dialogue should at last begin with the representatives of south-eastern Ukraine.

Russia will do everything it can to ensure that the conflict in eastern Ukraine moves from its current military phase into the phase of discussions at a negotiating table through peaceful and exclusively diplomatic means. However, our efforts alone are clearly not enough. It should be remembered that it is Kyiv and those whose instructions it is rigorously carrying out who are responsible for the ceasefire and the transition towards the building of national dialogue.

Mr. Chairperson,

The statements from a number of Ukrainian and Western figures on Russia's "humanitarian aggression" are, in our opinion, the pinnacle of anti-Russian hysteria. Instead of mythical armaments and mercenaries, Russia is sending humanitarian aid to Ukraine. The cargo consists of 69 mobile electric power generator units, 400 tonnes of grain, 340 tonnes of tinned meat, 30 tonnes of salt, 100 tonnes of sugar, 60 tonnes of tinned milk, 0.8 tonnes of tea, 679.5 tonnes of bottled water, 62.4 tonnes of baby food, 54 tonnes of medical supplies and 12,300 sleeping bags.

We have taken into account every request from the Ukrainian side, without exception, regarding all aspects of this operation, including the route that was proposed to us by Kyiv. It has been agreed that not only ICRC and OSCE staff but also representatives of the Ukrainian authorities should be allowed access to the trucks. ICRC representatives will meet the humanitarian cargo at the Ukrainian border at a location agreed upon with the authorities in Kyiv, will inspect it, and will proceed together with the convoy to the destination point. We are counting on the assurances given to us by the Ukrainian authorities that they will guarantee the security of the entire convoy on the territory controlled by Kyiv's security forces. We are expecting the militias to take a similar attitude to the humanitarian effort.

In this connection, we are completely puzzled by statements made by the Ukrainian Minister of Internal Affairs, Arsen Avakov, who has called the humanitarian aid delivery a "provocation". It is impossible to explain this as anything other than an irrational hatred towards not only Russia but also the inhabitants of Luhansk, who are in urgent need of this humanitarian cargo. Other statements by this so-called statesman have gone beyond the bounds of civilized behaviour as well. But then again, we got an idea of the cultural level of Ukrainian statesmen after the highly colourful statements made by Andrii Deshchytia.

For our part, we should like to ask our colleagues whether they would be bold enough to say here what specific cargos they are delivering to Ukraine by military transport aircraft. We should like to warn them against deliveries of armaments and military equipment – since, as the punitive operation has shown, much of the weaponry used by the Ukrainian army later ends up in the hands of the militias.

Are our Western colleagues not concerned about their citizens' involvement in the combat operations as part of the so-called volunteer battalions? The fact that neo-Nazis, including those from other countries, are taking part in military operations on Kyiv's side is no secret even for Western media, which previously shamefully failed to mention this information – for instance, the fact that Mikael Skillt, a Swedish mercenary who is now openly giving interviews, took part in the punitive operation and, what is more, was wearing a Swedish military uniform. Amnesty International regards the actions of Ukrainian nationalist, Oleh Lyashko, and his armed associates as a “flagrant violation of international legal standards” and demands that the Ukrainian authorities put a stop to his outrageous behaviour.

We have repeatedly urged the international community and Kyiv to ensure a transparent and impartial investigation of the events on the Maidan in February and the tragedies in Odessa and Mariupol in May – and there are still no results. Kyiv once again comes back to the version that people burned themselves to death in the Trade Union House fire in Odessa.

Overall, the direction Ukraine is taking, which the present authorities have called “European”, is worrying. Discussion of the promised amendments to the Ukrainian Constitution has been repeatedly postponed – now until autumn or perhaps even next year. A campaign for persecuting political opponents is gathering pace. The ban on Ukraine's Communist Party should give many people something to think about, especially those who remember history. More and more frequently we are hearing the term “enemies of the Ukrainian people”, which sounds reminiscent of the Stalin era. The Law on Sanctions, which was recently passed by the Verkhovna Rada in its first reading, has gone far beyond the notorious amendments to the laws of 16 January, which were used to step up violence in Kyiv and which many in this room called “draconian”. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović, has given her assessment of the law's provisions regarding the media, which we agree with in general.

No improvements have been observed regarding freedom of the media either. The practice of detaining and kidnapping journalists is still widespread in Ukraine. We are not ruling out the possibility that Andrey Stenin, a journalist for Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency reported missing on 5 August, has been the victim of a vicious attack, which is indirectly confirmed by the conflicting statements from Ukrainian law enforcement officials.

We are outraged at the continued flagrant violations of journalists' rights in Ukraine and demand that the authorities in Kyiv immediately take all the necessary steps to find and release Andrey Stenin, and to ensure safe working conditions for Russian and foreign journalists carrying out their professional duties in Ukraine.

Thank you for your attention.