



United States Mission to the OSCE

Crimea is Ukraine: Rejecting the Russian Federation's Conduct of a Sham Election in Crimea

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry R. Kamian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 22, 2018

Since its invasion and occupation of Crimea, Russia has held several rounds of sham elections in Crimea in an attempt to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and violate Ukraine's territorial integrity. The Russian occupation authorities staging these illegitimate elections deliberately engage in frequent and severe abuses, specifically targeting the Crimean Tatar community and others opposed to Russia's occupation. The United States strongly condemns Russia's efforts to coerce Ukrainian citizens in Crimea to vote in these illegitimate elections, including the latest on March 18. The United States did not recognize the legitimacy or outcome of the March 2014 referendum, and we do not recognize the elections Russia staged in Crimea on March 18. In Russia-occupied Crimea, by definition, elections conducted by the occupation authorities or under Russian law have no legitimacy.

Mr. Chair, Russia's effort to stage another illegitimate election in Crimea on March 18 was another attempt by Russia to give its purported annexation of Crimea a semblance of legitimacy. It was yet another sign of aggression against sovereignty and territorial integrity of Russia's neighbors. We will never accept Russia's occupation and purported annexation of Crimea. We support the Minsk agreements as the best way to end the conflict in eastern Ukraine, while respecting Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity.

Mr. Chair, the solution is clear. Russia must return control of the Crimean peninsula to Ukraine.

Thank you.