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ENGLISH only

28th OSCE Ministerial Council
Side Event
Russian Federation

Side-event

“Freedom of movement limitations and their impact on civilians in Ukraine”

2 December 2021

18:15 – 19:00

(Meeting Room “Amaryllis”)

In its 8th year, the internal conflict in eastern regions of Ukraine continues to pose a vital threat and puts a great burden for all those living in conflict-affected areas near the line of contact.

As highlighted in the most recent SMM thematic report, the major reasons for civilians to cross the line of contact are their needs to maintain family connections and to obtain social payments and pensions. Absolute majority of Donbass residents, entitled to those benefits, have got the right for such payments before the outbreak of the conflict, mostly in return for their personal input into Ukraine’s economic development through their work in the country’s public sector.

However, in 2014, Kiev cut off the financial sector institutions in certain areas of Donbass from the rest of Ukraine, including from the State Treasury system. Throughout 2014-2017, Ukraine’s authorities imposed the de-facto and de-jure socio-economic blockade on the certain areas of Donbass. This resulted in cutting transport connections, food and medical supplies, introducing of entry-exit checkpoints at the line of contact, conducting there checks of passports, ID-cards etc.

Thus, it would fair for the SMM to indicate in its reports references to the framework decisions taken by the government of Ukraine in this regard, albeit they fall outside the chronological scope of the current Thematic report.

Of course, other factors also have an impact on civilian mobility. These are overall security situation in areas adjacent to the line of contact and restrictions introduced by the sides in relation to countering the spread of COVID-19.

Deteriorating security situation has its direct impact on the ability to ensure safe and secure travels through the crossing points at the line of contact. Since November last year, the SMM reported more than 7.000 ceasefire violations near them, including more than 500 (half a thousand) near the currently operational ones. Derogation by Ukraine in September this year from the measures to strengthen the ceasefire, lead to the destruction of the mechanism for providing security guarantees. This resulted in escalation of tensions along the whole line of contact – for example, near the newly built crossing point in Zolotoe, the functioning of which would not be possible without due security guarantees.

The Russian Federation continues to urge the sides of conflict – Kiev, Donetsk and Lugansk - to engage constructively into direct dialogue as prescribed by the Minsk agreements and by the commonly agreed conclusions of the Normandy

Summits, concerning all aspects of the settlement, including on humanitarian issues. So far, we regret to see that the authorities in Kiev are evading such direct dialogue, thus sabotaging the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Ensuring genuine freedom of movement of civilians from certain areas of Donbass to the rest of Ukraine and vice versa is one of the goals of the settlement process to this conflict. The only internationally recognized basis for such settlement is the “Package of Measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements” of 12 February 2015, endorsed by the UNSC Resolution 2202. This is hard law which must be implemented.

The sooner the “Package of Measures” is implemented in its entirety, the sooner the humanitarian situation on the ground will be significantly improved. In other words, sustainable political solution to the crisis is the only way to effectively alleviate and finally put an end to the sufferings of civilians in Donbass.

Thank you.