



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Ongoing Violations of International Law and Defiance of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation in Ukraine**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
July 7, 2016

The United States thanks OSCE Special Monitoring Mission Chief Monitor Apakan, who heads the Trilateral Contact Group's security working group, and OSCE Special Envoy Martin Sajdik, for their efforts to bring about disengagement and a lasting ceasefire in eastern Ukraine. Despite apparent progress in the TCG on disengagement plans along the line of contact, combined Russian-separatist forces have continued to launch attacks on Ukrainian positions using heavy weapons proscribed by Minsk, while methodically obstructing the SMM from fulfilling its mandate. In the last week, eight Ukrainian personnel were killed and more than three dozen were wounded.

We hope for a full agreement on disengagement in Zolote, Petrivske, and Stanytsia-Luhanska. However, it is difficult to positively assess Russia and the separatists' seriousness when combined Russian-separatist forces block the SMM's access to locations slated for disengagement. Twice this week, separatist forces blocked the SMM from entering Petrivske. As it committed to do when it signed the Minsk agreements, Russia must grant the SMM full and unfettered access throughout Ukraine, including areas of disengagement.

Russia and the separatists perpetuate a high level of violence that harms the civilian population in eastern Ukraine and threatens OSCE monitors. On June 27, separatists attempting to lay mines in Shyrokyne were captured by Ukrainian forces. On June 29, the SMM could not access territory near Debaltseve due to the lack of security. The SMM reported a significant increase in fighting July 1-2, with a record number of ceasefire violations. Fighting was particularly intense around Donetsk city, Avdiivka, and Kominternove. This dangerous situation forced the SMM to withdraw monitors from its forward patrol hub at Svitlodarsk.

The lack of security, fueled by provocative actions taken by combined Russian-separatist forces, including threats to and access restrictions placed on the SMM, demonstrate the need for enhanced SMM monitoring through technical means, such as unmanned aerial vehicles and cameras. However, combined Russian-separatist forces also methodically obstruct these instruments. We note with concern that the SMM is currently without long-range UAVs after these aircraft were downed by live-fire or jamming. We look to the Secretary General and the Secretariat to work with the SMM's current UAV contractor to get long-range UAVs back in the air and to move ahead with finalizing the contract with a new UAV provider. UAVs and other technical monitoring means will be of great importance when the SMM begins monitoring disengagement zones.

Colleagues, while we discuss disengagement and SMM monitoring of the line of contact, let us remember that these are only steps toward our goals of a genuine ceasefire in the conflict

zone, the withdrawal of weapons, and full implementation of the Minsk agreements. During last week's Annual Security Review Conference, we heard many calls for implementation of the Minsk agreements. We also heard Russia deny that it has any role in the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The Russian Federation alternated between calling this an "internal conflict" and "a civil war" between so-called radical nationalists and the residents of the Donbas. Russia does so despite clear evidence to the contrary, including evidence of the presence of advanced Russian weaponry in the Donbas.

Colleagues, if you read closely the SMM report from July 5, you will note that monitors observed near a lake in "LPR"-controlled Uspenka several trucks loaded with pontoons and two military cranes. The SMM assessed the situation as preparation for a pontoon bridge crossing exercise. The presence of such equipment in separatist-controlled territory points to Russia's role in the conflict, arming, training, and fighting alongside separatists in eastern Ukraine.

The United States remains fully committed to supporting a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Ukraine – a peaceful resolution that recognizes and respects that nation's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We once again call on Russia and the separatists to stop the violence, fully implement their commitments in the Minsk agreements, including granting the OSCE full access and guaranteeing the safety of monitors. Ukraine cannot be expected to make progress on the political elements of the Minsk agreements until there is a sustained ceasefire, pullback of heavy weapons from the line of contact, and unimpeded access for OSCE monitors, up to and including Ukraine's internationally recognized border with Russia – three commitments that Russia made in February 2015, but which we still not have seen fully implemented.

Russia's international obligations extend to Crimea, where Russia must put an end to its oppressive and discriminatory treatment of the population of this part of Ukraine. UN Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights Ivan Šimonović has cited new cases of abuses in Russia-occupied Crimea. Russia's systematic intimidation of Crimean Tatars includes unjust detentions, reports of kidnapping and torture, and searches of Crimean Tatars' homes and places of worship. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, a Geneva-based group, estimates the total number of displaced persons who left Crimea following Russia's purported annexation was likely between 50,000 and 60,000 people. Others, including Crimea SOS, a Ukrainian charity, estimate the real figure to be as high as 100,000. U.S. sanctions against the Russian Federation will continue until it ends its occupation of Crimea and returns this land to Ukraine. Separately, U.S. sanctions for Russia's aggression in eastern Ukraine will also remain until the Minsk agreements are fully implemented.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.