

PC.DEL/889/14

17 July 2014

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
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AT THE 1009th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 July 2014

**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 would once again call on our colleagues, when they speak of OSCE principles and commitments, not to lose sight of the fact that one of the most important principles of the Helsinki Final Act is the right of the people to self-determination; the right to decide their own fate. I repeat: the return of Crimea to the Russian Federation took place on the basis of a voluntary plebiscite expressing the will of the vast majority of the population.

The sixth principle of the Helsinki Final Act on non-intervention in internal affairs is extremely important. The worst violation of this principle is incitement to oust the constitutionally lawful government. This was precisely the aim of actions primarily carried out by the United States of America, which dispatched its official representatives to the Maidan, gave out sandwiches on the streets, and decided which of the Maidan leaders to make prime minister and who should not be permitted to take power.

In this way, it was they who launched a dangerous political process that turned into a profound internal Ukrainian crisis. What we now see is nothing more than a primitive attempt to take revenge because events are not developing according to Washington's plan. Instead of knocking some sense into the Ukrainian leadership, which has sent heavy armour, aviation and artillery to be used against the residents of Donbas and Luhansk region, the White House is trying to stoke further bloodshed while cynically washing its hands of any responsibility for events. The only thing that the United States is doing is to loudly advertise its unlawful unilateral sanctions, behind which we can clearly see a geopolitical vendetta that, essentially, has nothing to do with Ukraine.

We are also disappointed that the European Union, against its own interests, has capitulated to the blackmail of the United States administration and chosen the path of sanctions against Russia.

At the last meeting, the United States representative recalled a United Nations General Assembly resolution which was not supported by around half of the Member States of the worldwide organization. We would ask that you also not forget another United Nations General Assembly resolution: No. 68/8 on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. Not 100, but 188, States voted in favour of this document. Indeed, this figure has remained the same for the past ten years, but has no impact on the position of the United States. This is clearly the essence of American exceptionalism. Or, if you will, isolation.

Returning to the substance of the issue we should like to thank the Swiss Chairmanship for its businesslike, balanced and professional approach to facilitating a settlement of the crisis in Ukraine. We trust that it will allow us to adopt a consensus decision on Russia's initiative in the very near future. As a demonstration of goodwill, and without waiting for a ceasefire, we have invited OSCE observers to the Donetsk and Gukovo checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border. A needs assessment team is already working on the ground and we await its conclusions and recommendations. It would be a shame if the group did not manage to visit the checkpoints themselves because of continuing shelling from Ukrainian territory.

In this regard, the comments by the representative of the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding our initiative are surprising. He stated that sending OSCE observers to our checkpoints would "disorient the international community" and even "discredit the efforts of the Ukrainian leadership". Clearly, Kyiv is afraid that OSCE observers will see the reality at the checkpoints and establish that no military equipment is passing through them.

Indeed, this is a truly practical measure that should help allay unfounded fears of mythical transfers of weapons and military equipment across the border and, as a result, help to de-escalate the situation.

As for the most recent mythical columns of Russian armoured equipment and participation of Russian military specialists in combat: as they say, "fear hath a hundred eyes". There is no credible proof. The peculiarities and operational blunders of one's own troops cannot be attributed to Russia.

We recall how, in April, several pieces of armoured equipment were directly transferred from the army to insurgents in Sloviansk. Clearly, this practice is continuing. No small quantity of weapons has been seized from the warehouses of military units or left on the battlefield. A large number of weapons were probably sold on the black market – a widespread practice in Ukraine. It seems we have to conclude that the main supplier to the militia is not Russia but domestic sources: the sale of weapons from depots and inventory stock.

The main strength of the insurgents is the support of the local population which does not want to surrender to detachments of the National Guard and other battalions.

Petro Poroshenko's unilateral ceasefire, as the subsequent turn of events has shown, was integral to the strategy of the punitive operation. It was simply used to regroup forces and draw up reserves. In reality, the ceasefire was not observed by either side.

We call, yet again, for a mutual ceasefire respected by both sides. We call on all parties to the conflict to restart dialogue. Clearly, this kind of inclusive dialogue cannot be based on ultimatums. It is vital to show readiness to examine the demands of the opposite side. A lack of willingness to take account of the interests of all parties and attempts to force through one's own will, such as through force or sanctions, will only deepen dividing lines.

We recall that it would have been possible to settle the situation constitutionally in February: it would have sufficed to fulfil the agreement of 21 February.

In March, a proper national dialogue with representatives of all regions could have been launched to develop mutually-acceptable parameters for constitutional reform. If the "government of the winners" had sent the Maidan campaigners home and demonstrated a will for compromise, then administrative buildings would probably also not have been seized – neither in the west nor the east. As they say in our part of the world, a bad example is infectious.

In April, instead of dialogue, a punitive operation was announced. May saw the tragedies in Odessa and Mariupol. In June, air attacks began in Luhansk. July is being marked by an unprecedented intensification of combat activities. The spiral of violence continues to worsen. It is vital to put the swiftest possible end to the civil war in Ukraine from both sides. Nothing is heard about a renewal of national dialogue. The amendments to the Ukrainian constitution that have been passed to the Venice Commission essentially focus on bolstering presidential authority. They do not include other extremely important provisions that have been promised.

We have repeatedly provided information on the number of displaced persons from the area of the punitive operation who have chosen to flee to Russian territory.

Judging by the protests of wives and mothers we see in various Ukrainian towns, the people who voted for Petro Poroshenko did not want this. They wanted the peace they were promised, but what they are getting are maimings and murders.

Thank you for your attention.