



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Special Permanent Council, Vienna
May 27, 2015

The United States warmly welcomes Ambassador Tagliavini back to the Permanent Council. While we very much appreciate your briefings given via video link, it is a pleasure to have you here in person. Thank you very much for your very clear presentation, in particular for laying out what you see from your expert position as the parameters that we must preserve in order to have a chance at success.

Ambassador Tagliavini, it has been one year since you assumed the leadership of the Trilateral Contact Group, a position in which you have helped forge agreements that provide the means to reach a peaceful end to the crisis in and around Ukraine. We join others around this table in commending your tireless work and resolute commitment. Today, the Trilateral Contact Group's work is as important as ever.

We underscore the importance of the Minsk agreements and emphasize that the full implementation of their provisions is needed to ensure a lasting peace in Ukraine. We welcome the establishment of the subsidiary working groups of the Trilateral Contact Group as called for in the February 12 Package of Measures. These working groups provide an opportunity for the parties to focus on key issues such as the withdrawal of heavy weapons, ceasefire enforcement, humanitarian responses, improving the economic situation, and preparations for local elections, and the release of hostages including Nadiya Savchenko and Oleg Sentsov.

We were pleased by reports of the economic working group's May 14 meeting, during which genuine proposals for restoring the economic infrastructure in Donetsk and Luhansk were put forward. We were disappointed, however, to hear that while the security working group met for the first time on May 19 to discuss a disengagement plan for Shyrokyne, it did not produce results. This delay hinders both the working group and the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, which relies on a lasting ceasefire to safely execute its verification of the Minsk provisions.

We urge the humanitarian working group to swiftly establish international mechanisms for the delivery of much needed humanitarian aid to areas in eastern Ukraine. This working group should also consider verifying the receipt of this aid and ensuring that its beneficiaries are vulnerable citizens of Ukraine – not separatist fighters. We also hope that this group will outline ways to ensure the release of all hostages and illegally detained individuals, as called

for in the Minsk agreements. The participation of the International Committee of the Red Cross could facilitate the efforts of this working group.

The political working group must work toward the establishment of conditions necessary for free and fair local elections in parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. This working group must ensure that these elections are held under Ukrainian law and in accordance with OSCE standards. For these elections to be considered free and fair, among other factors, ODIHR must be allowed access to separatist-controlled territory to conduct a pre-election assessment. We note the Special Monitoring Mission's May 20 report stated that SMM monitors and ODIHR officials were blocked by separatists on their way to Donetsk. We hope the political working group will address the issue of access immediately, in good faith, and without attempting to redraw lines agreed in Minsk.

Now is the time for the working groups to address the issues they have been tasked with, and to avoid needless discussions on the working groups' format, working methods, and representation. These working groups are subsidiaries of the Trilateral Contact Group, and, accordingly, should be chaired by OSCE representatives. Any attempt to minimize the role of the OSCE in the working groups, or to minimize the role of the Trilateral Contact Group itself, must be rejected. The Trilateral Contact Group and working groups are called for and their compositions are detailed in the Minsk agreements and implementation plan.

The establishment of the working groups presents an opportunity for all parties to work together and develop concrete proposals that advance the implementation of the Minsk agreements and implementation plan. We urge the groups to meet as regularly as possible and to focus on genuine solutions to the current crisis and to share any identified opportunities for progress with the Trilateral Contact Group.

We call on Russia to live up to the assurances that President Putin gave to Secretary Kerry in Sochi that Russia is committed to Minsk implementation. Russia should engage concretely and in good faith in the Trilateral Contact Group and its subsidiary working groups. Russia and the separatists it backs must support the SMM's efforts to facilitate local ceasefires in key hotspots. Russia and the separatists it backs should accept a disengagement plan in Shyrokyne, which can help efforts toward ceasefires in other locations. Russia must stop sending weapons and military personnel into eastern Ukraine. Russia must stop providing training and command and control support for the separatists. Russia must release all hostages and illegally detained persons. Russia must end its occupation of Crimea. Russia must respect Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In closing, Ambassador Tagliavini, let me once again offer the thanks of the United States for the work that you and your team are doing to find a peaceful solution to the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.