



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Remarks of the Secretary General to the Special Permanent Council

Vienna, 7 March 2022

Thank you Chair.

Dear colleagues,

I would like to echo on the Chair's comments on the shocking armed violence, indiscriminate attacks on civilians, and worsening humanitarian crisis across Ukraine; as well as the steadily increasing strain on neighboring countries as people flee the fighting.

Amidst these circumstances, I wanted to provide an update on our ongoing evacuation and relocation.

Since we met on Thursday, I am pleased to report that the remaining teams of international mission members have now moved to safety.

The team from Kherson evacuated on Saturday and are now in Sochi, preparing for onward travel.

The SMM senior management – whom I thank again for their dedication and support – have now evacuated from western Ukraine to Moldova.

This means that the almost 500 international mission members present in Ukraine at the outset of the Russian military operation have now been evacuated, completing this part of the decision taken by the Chair and I from 24 February.

I want to thank all neighboring countries for their support in this operation, as well as Turkey and Austria. I also want to thank others for their offers of psychosocial support.

But, *dear colleagues*, our work is not done.

Our work to support national mission members and facilitate their relocation is ongoing.

Some travelled as part of our convoys to date, other national mission members have already relocated on their own. We will continue to help them get to safety where possible and as requested.

National mission members continue to use OSCE vehicles to relocate. They continue to use OSCE premises to shelter.

So there should be no doubt or suggestion that the SMM or PCU is gone just because the internationals are gone. That our premises are unused or our vehicles discarded.

The SMM, the PCU and its people are still there, and depend on our infrastructure.

But the stark reality is that many national mission members still remain in cities that are currently besieged.

As the Chief Monitor, the Project Coordinator and I have communicated, their safety takes priority over any duties. We do not and cannot expect them to work in such circumstances.

And I want to draw your attention to Mariupol in particular.

Yesterday, our office there was damaged in shelling. Two vehicles were destroyed in the parking area immediately outside.

Thankfully, there were no casualties among those in the building.

But 50 people were sheltering at the office at the time of the attack, including 12 national mission members and their families and the Greek Consul General, who had relocated to our premises. I have raised this incident with counterparts at the political level, to avoid any repeat.

Colleagues

This damage was despite a second day of hopes for a humanitarian corridor from Mariupol. Hopes that were dashed.

And this was not an isolated incident. Other corridors suggested also failed to hold; many of you will have seen the shocking images from Irpin near Kyiv.

Our remaining national staff – like all Ukrainian civilians – desperately need humanitarian assistance, protection, firm guarantees and credible routes for safe passage, to ensure their safety and security. We are on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe.

As consulted and agreed with the Chair, the focus of OSCE work in Ukraine will be to help avert a humanitarian crisis and create the conditions for assistance and evacuation.

Over the weekend, in addition to the Chair, I have been in touch with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the ICRC and UNHCR.

The focus of the work of the PCU and SMM will be reoriented to facilitate humanitarian support, within their existing mandates.

The OSCE retains premises, a fleet of vehicles, and has long experience as an intermediary to facilitate localized ceasefires – which we believe can be put to good use in supporting the provision of humanitarian assistance, and facilitating evacuation and relocation of Ukrainian citizens.

I will update the Permanent Council further on this on Thursday.

Dear colleagues,

Once again, I appeal for an immediate end to armed violence in Ukraine that is inflicting such tragedy, distress and upheaval on so many families, and on so many innocent civilians.

Thank you, and I again reiterate that the Secretariat, PCU and SMM colleagues remain at your disposal and will continue to work around the clock to support our people and the people of Ukraine.