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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1018th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

9 October 2014

**In response to the report by the Acting Chief Observer of the
OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints of Gukovo and
Donetsk on the Russian-Ukrainian border, Mr. Paul Picard**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Picard,

We are pleased to welcome you to today's Permanent Council meeting and are grateful for the informative report on the work of the OSCE observers at the Russian checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk. Russia values the work of your team and the detailed, reliable and impartial information that the team sends to Vienna. We note in particular the constructive working relations that the observers have established with the Russian border guards and customs officers.

The rapid deployment of the observers to the checkpoints in spite of attempts by a number of delegations to artificially drag out the adoption of the team's mandate demonstrated the Organization's ability to respond promptly to the changing situation and effectively carry out the tasks being assigned to the OSCE by the participating States.

I might recall that the invitation to host an OSCE border monitoring operation was a goodwill gesture on the part of Russia. It was made in the wake of the Berlin declaration of 2 July 2014. Without waiting for a ceasefire to be established in neighbouring Ukraine, Russia deployed OSCE observers at the Russian checkpoints of Donetsk and Gukovo to dispel concerns regarding security at the border.

This was a useful and timely confidence-building measure. As once again confirmed by today's report, no border violations or cross-border movements involving Russian armaments or mysterious mercenaries have been recorded by the OSCE observers. It is true that on one occasion they witnessed an attempt at smuggling an illegal weapon across the border, but they saw it confiscated by customs officers. They also had an opportunity to see for themselves the consequences of Ukrainian shelling near the two Russian checkpoints.

On the other hand, each week the reports have confirmed what we have been saying for months and what our colleagues have failed to mention in their statements – the huge numbers of civilians from Donbas fleeing to Russian territory to escape the punitive operation. The observers reported that in most cases these were families with children and elderly people fleeing the combat zone or simply inhabitants of the border regions of Ukraine crossing the border to buy food and medicines in Russia or find a working automated teller machine (ATM). They have provided the observers with an eyewitness account of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Donbas. Among the people crossing the border were young people in “military-style dress”, but they were not carrying weapons. The serious conclusions that our colleagues from the European Union and the United States of America draw from this are completely unfounded.

It is important that now, following the Minsk ceasefire agreements, Ukrainian citizens begin to return from Russia to Donbas. Evidently, judging by their conversations with the observers, many have their doubts and do not fully believe that the violence has ceased for good. In spite of this, people are returning, and this is encouraging. At the same time, this confirms the need for the urgent adoption of measures that will not only ensure a lasting ceasefire but will also lead to the gradual restoration of destroyed civilian infrastructure and the economic rehabilitation of the regions affected. Points 8 and 11 of the Minsk Protocol make reference to this task, along with the need to adopt measures to improve the humanitarian situation in Donbas.

Colleagues have repeatedly referred to the mention in the Berlin declaration of the possibility of inviting Ukrainian border guards to Russian checkpoints. However, they have purposely omitted the fact that such a step was clearly made conditional on the existence of a ceasefire regime in eastern Ukraine. Despite its absence, as a goodwill gesture and on the basis of a bilateral agreement between the Russian and Ukrainian border authorities, since 15 August 58 Ukrainian border guards have been deployed at the Russian checkpoint of Donetsk. Unfortunately, they declined the invitation to inspect the humanitarian convoys carrying aid for the civilian population of Donbas. Nevertheless, as agreed by the border authorities of the two countries, a rotation of the Ukrainian border guards occurred on 16 and 17 September. They still have an opportunity to work together with their Russian counterparts and to observe passenger and freight traffic passing through the Donetsk checkpoint.

Mr. Chairperson,

As a goodwill gesture and an important confidence-building measure, Russia is ready to give constructive consideration to the question of extending the current mandate of the team of OSCE observers for a further three months. We take note of the proposals made by our colleagues regarding the expansion of its geographical coverage. As Russia sees it, the border with Ukraine is reliably patrolled by the Border Service of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation. The OSCE observers have already had three months to see this for themselves.

Border monitoring is among the topics discussed in the Contact Group as part of the process launched under the Minsk agreements. We do not believe that we should second-guess the results of the discussions in this forum. The priority task at the current time is to ensure comprehensive compliance with the ceasefire regime so as to create the

conditions for a political settlement of the conflict and the establishment of an inclusive internal Ukrainian dialogue on national reconciliation.

In conclusion, we should like once again to thank Mr. Picard and his team of observers for their selfless, conscientious and transparent work, and wish them continued success. Russia is ready to continue to provide them with the necessary assistance in this regard.

Thank you for your attention.