



United States Mission to the OSCE

Replies to Russia on its Ongoing Violations in Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 21, 2016

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Just to respond to the statement of our distinguished Russian colleague -- who just responded to my statement and said that he disagreed with what he claimed I said-- He claimed I said that all restrictions on the SMM are the result of the Russia-backed separatists. I did not say that all restrictions on the SMM are the result of the actions of the Russia-backed separatists. I said the majority of the restrictions -- and that's been true for many months now -- that the majority of the restrictions on the SMM's movement and vision have been perpetrated by Russia and the separatists it backs. We certainly would happily repeat our call -- that we have repeated many times -- that all actors on the ground should give full, unfettered, safe access to the SMM. And that goes for all actors on the ground.

Since I've already taken the floor, I just want to respond to a couple of other points. First of all, I agree with our distinguished Russian colleague that "the package of measures" --like the Minsk protocol-- "was signed by both sides of the conflict." It was signed by Russia and Ukraine, and also happened to be signed by some of the armed militants who were working for Russia on the ground.

I think it's important--our distinguished Russian colleague highlighted the issue of people queueing for hours, which is an issue the United States also raised, at checkpoints. One of the challenges has been opening new checkpoints. I know that there was an effort a few weeks ago to open a new checkpoint that had been planned out, and it was impossible because Russian-backed separatists forces were shelling the transit point between the checkpoints. And so one of the reasons why the disengagement plan is so important is that it would allow for the opening of these new checkpoints, so we share the sense of urgency around opening those. I would urge Russia, if it cares about those checkpoints, to do everything it can to restrict its military personnel as well as those fighting alongside them on the ground from shelling those checkpoints.

Finally, just one other point. I don't know if, again, the translation was -- I don't know what the distinguished Russian colleague said in Russian, but in the translation, at one point he said something like, "until Kyiv gets going on the political package, none of the discussions

on stabilization can make progress.” And that sounds like exactly what we’ve been thinking we’ve been seeing for the last more than a year, which is that when Russia wants something politically, or doesn’t like something that’s happening politically, it uses a violent veto by turning up the fighting on the ground in order to achieve political gains.

And I just think it’s important for all of us in this room to recognize the admission of that tactic that we heard today. And I would offer, Mr. Chair, that we would urge Russia to see that the violent veto is not a responsible way to do statecraft in the 21st Century, and to go to the negotiating table, and to make progress on the political package and security assurances in tandem, and not to threaten additional violence because it is unhappy with the political track.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

###

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I’d like to reassure all colleagues that the United States’ position is unified in both time and space. It has been consistent over the last two and a half years since Russia began its military action on the territory of Ukraine with the illegal occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea, and continued by fomenting conflict in eastern Ukraine.

There is, of course, a difference between what can be said in private conversations and what is said in public -- mainly because in private conversations Russian officials do not always say the things that Russian officials say in this forum -- and I was responding to what our distinguished Russian colleague had said in this forum.

He repeated again just now, “we don’t engage in military action in Ukraine.” This is in direct contravention of what President Putin has said publicly when he confessed that Russia is involved “including in the military sphere” in eastern Ukraine.

So rather than lecture the rest of us on proper behavior in this forum, I would just submit that all of us should be committed, as a first step, to treating each other with respect in the sense of not knowingly telling things that are untrue to each other in this forum. As a first step, refraining from prevarication would help us get to real dialogue.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

###