



United States Mission to the OSCE

Ongoing Violations of International Law and Defiance of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation in Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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The United States welcomes the continued, concrete steps taken by the government of Ukraine to carry out its responsibilities under the February 12 Package of Measures to Implement the Minsk Agreements.

The government has pressed forward with implementing a key political provision of the Package of Measures. On March 17, the Verkhovna Rada approved legislation specifying the areas of eastern Ukraine that will be covered under the Special Status Law of September 2014.

The area is defined by the ceasefire line agreed by the Trilateral Contact Group in the September 19 Minsk Memorandum, and as called for in point four of the Package of Measures for implementing that memorandum and the September 5 Minsk Protocol.

This legislation can be the first step in returning to the path to new local elections consistent with Ukrainian law, a path that was disrupted by the sham elections of last November. Given that Russia has urged hasty work on this political process, we expect Russia to welcome this step.

These steps further demonstrate Ukraine's commitment to the Minsk agreements and the peace process. When combined with the government's continued efforts to address the fundamental problems of corruption and poor governance that fueled last year's protests on the Maidan, it is evident that Ukraine's political leadership is determined to take the steps necessary to ensure a peaceful and prosperous Ukraine for all Ukrainians.

The government is also working to implement the security components of the Package of Measures.

SMM reports from the past week have made clear that the Armed Forces of Ukraine generally allow the SMM unfettered access throughout the territory it controls. While there have been some restrictions, these isolated incidents appear to be the exception to the rule and have decreased in number and significance over time. Most notably, the SMM has reported that it has had access to government heavy weapons storage sites and that those sites contain all of the weapons expected to be there. We welcome Defense Minister Poltorak's recent

comments that Ukraine is ready for the SMM to conduct surprise inspections of the storage sites.

In stark contrast to the continued, concrete steps taken by the government of Ukraine, Russia and the separatists it backs continue to fail to implement the Package of Measures.

SMM reports have detailed numerous instances of Russia-backed separatists violating the ceasefire in recent days, including in the area near the Donetsk airport and in the villages guarding the approach to Mariupol, most notably Shyrokyne.

While Russia-backed separatists publicly claimed to have completed the withdrawal of their heavy weapons from the contact line, SMM reporting has told us a different story. SMM reports have repeatedly documented that the separatists continue to deploy and use weapons that are larger than the proscribed 100mm caliber in areas that the separatists claim to be free from such armaments.

The separatists have not provided the SMM with full information about their heavy weapons withdrawal plans.

Russia – a signatory of the Package of Measures – has failed to even respond to Ambassador Apakan’s letter requesting withdrawal plans.

The Russia-backed separatists continue to prevent the SMM from travelling through much of the territory they control.

Large swaths of land, including the border between separatist-held territory and Russia, are off-limits to the SMM. To cite just one example, an official from the so-called “Luhansk People’s Republic” prevented the SMM from monitoring the area near Izvaryne, which is just across the border from where the OSCE Observer Mission is stationed at the Donetsk checkpoint in Russia. This individual read a prepared statement to the SMM monitors in which he said that he had not received instructions from his leaders authorizing unrestricted patrolling by the SMM.

This is unacceptable.

The SMM must have unfettered access throughout the territory of Ukraine, without exception.

In the midst of these failures to implement the Package of Measures, Russia continues to supply the separatists with heavy weaponry across a porous border on which it denies a genuine international monitoring presence.

Mr. Chair, there is no way to achieve peace in Ukraine when Russia continues to fan the flames with its ongoing provision of weapons, personnel, and financial support to the separatists. Robust international monitoring on both sides of the border remains a critical component of any peaceful resolution to this conflict.

The United States fully supports the OSCE's efforts to support a peaceful resolution of the crisis in and around Ukraine. Now that we have extended the mandate for the SMM for a year, we all need to make sure that the SMM has the resources it needs to do its job. We also need to maintain support for Ambassador Tagliavini's efforts as chair of the Trilateral Contact Group to find a peaceful resolution to the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

Mr. Chair, the path towards peace in Ukraine remains as clear as it has been throughout this crisis. Long-term resolution of the crisis will only come when Russia takes action to bring about peace. It must ensure that the separatists respect the ceasefire and allow the SMM unfettered access throughout Ukraine. It must withdraw all of its military personnel and equipment from Ukraine. It must cease providing the separatists troops, equipment, financing, and political support. It must allow international monitoring of the border. It must immediately release all detained persons, including Nadiya Savchenko and others held in Russia. And it must leave Crimea.

Until Russia takes actual steps towards peace, its words proclaiming good intentions remain empty and meaningless.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.