



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 Chargé d’Affaires Courtney Austrian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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For seven grim years, Russia has fueled a bloody conflict that has taken the lives of more than 13,000 Ukrainian citizens. More than 1.4 million persons have been displaced, forced to flee their homes and communities in eastern Ukraine. All the while, the Kremlin armed, trained, led, and fought alongside armed groups in the Donbas. Last week, Russia-led forces conducted two large-scale live-fire exercises in the areas of eastern Ukraine under the Kremlin’s control; those exercises accounted for 10 percent of all ceasefire violations recorded since July 27, 2020. This is a very clear signal from Moscow the Kremlin has no plans to adjust course anytime soon.

The Minsk *Protocol* of September 5, 2014; the Minsk *Memorandum* of September 19, 2014; and the Minsk *Package of Measures* of February 12, 2015 are collectively the “Minsk agreements.” They remain the key to a diplomatic resolution to the Russia-orchestrated conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Turning the Minsk agreements into practical measures is the mission of the *Trilateral Contact Group* (TCG), which consists of three parties: Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE. These are the indisputable facts.

Rather than engaging constructively at the TCG and implementing the Minsk agreements, Russia falsely claims it is not a belligerent but rather an impartial mediator in the conflict. Rather than displaying political will and taking action to protect the “fates of real people,” Russia instead offers meandering lectures on the *Package of Measures* to distract attention from its ongoing aggression against Ukraine.

The humanitarian crisis in eastern Ukraine continues as Russia blocks civilian movement across the *Line of Contact*, endangering the lives of the elderly and infirm and depriving pensioners of funds they need to make ends meet. Ukraine opened new *Entry-Exit Crossing Points* in Zolote and Shchastiya. Russia failed to reciprocate, refusing to open checkpoints in the areas it controls. Thus, Russia limited civilian traffic to pedestrian-only at Stanytsia Luhanska and, with considerable exceptions, at Novotroitske.

We await the day Russia engages constructively in peace negotiations, including at the TCG and in the Normandy Format. We urge the Kremlin to direct the armed groups it supports to alleviate the suffering of civilians in eastern Ukraine by allowing them to cross the *Line of Contact*, including at Zolote and Shchastiya.

February 27 marks seven years since “little green men” first appeared on the Crimean Peninsula, launching Russia’s occupation. Russia has spent the last seven years targeting for abuse Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians and others opposed to the occupation. Russian occupation authorities harass, detain, arrest, and prosecute those who dare speak out against Moscow and criticize its repressive measures. The Kremlin conscripts thousands of young Crimeans into Russia’s Armed Forces and prosecutes those who refuse to serve in the forces of an occupying power.

Moscow’s aggression against and occupation of its sovereign neighbor Ukraine has gone on long enough. Russia, end your occupation of Crimea, halt your aggression in the Black and Azov seas, and instruct the armed groups you support in the Donbas to lay down arms, and withdraw your forces and hardware from the territory of Ukraine.

Madam Chair, the United States fully supports Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, including its territorial waters. We do not, nor will we ever, recognize Russia’s purported annexation of Crimea. We join our European and other partners in affirming our Minsk-related sanctions against Russia will remain in place until it fully implements its Minsk commitments. The Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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