



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

# **Ongoing Violations of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation and the Situation in Ukraine**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
January 15, 2015

This is the first opportunity we have had to gather together as a Council since the end of 2014. The end of one year and beginning of a new one is traditionally a time for reflection, and so I would like to use this opportunity to reflect on what happened over the course of 2014.

2014 did not turn out the way any of us expected it would when it began. 2014 was dominated by a crisis in European security instigated by Russia's violations of international law and total disregard for its OSCE commitments. Russia has invaded, occupied, and attempted to annex Crimea, a portion of the sovereign territory of its neighbor Ukraine. It has provided weapons, materiel, personnel, and financial support to armed separatists operating in eastern Ukraine, where it instigated a conflict that is still raging until today in order to destabilize the democratically elected government of Ukraine. Russia-backed separatists shot down a commercial airliner in the skies above Hrabove, killing all 283 passengers and 15 crew on board. Russia and the separatists it backs have kidnapped and held hostage hundreds of Ukrainian citizens, as well as a number of OSCE monitors. Hundreds of Ukrainian citizens are still being held. Many are still being held in Russia – yet Russia denies its involvement in the conflict. Thousands of Ukrainians have lost their lives and hundreds of thousands more have had their lives irreparably damaged as a result of Russia's actions.

A new year is a time to make resolutions, a time to decide how to make the next year better than the last. We hope that Russia will take advantage of this new year to end the crisis in and around Ukraine and rebuild trust and relationships in the OSCE region by finally fulfilling the commitments it signed on to in Minsk in September.

Unfortunately, we have yet to see any evidence that the Russian Federation or the separatists that it supports have decided to use the new year to work toward peace. Rather, we have seen a significant and worrying increase in violence. The Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine reported that the Joint Center for Control and Co-ordination, which is staffed by both Ukrainian and Russian military officers, reported a "marked deterioration" in the security situation. Our information shows that hundreds of pieces of military equipment, including tanks and rockets, have flowed from Russia into Ukraine since the Minsk agreements. Indeed, just a few days ago, a separatist leader in Donetsk admitted on television that the separatists had "returned to active fighting," and acknowledged that the level of violence was back to where it was before the Government of Ukraine unilaterally adopted its "silence regime" on

December 9. This resumption of violence has led to serious incidents in the last few days, including the attack by a Grad rocket fired from separatist-held territory on a passenger bus waiting at a Ukrainian security checkpoint that left twelve civilians dead and sixteen injured, and a renewed attack on Donetsk airport that ultimately collapsed the Donetsk air traffic control tower, a long-standing symbol of Ukrainian resistance. These events confirm what we have seen since January 3 – an increased push by Russia and the separatists it supports to not only consolidate the territory it currently controls, but to push far past the ceasefire line agreed to on September 19.

The recent spike in fighting is just the latest episode in the continued violations of the ceasefire agreement by the Russia-backed separatists. According to one account, the separatists have taken 550 square miles of territory since the ceasefire was signed in September. This is deeply troubling. The United States condemns this continued violence and the attempts by the separatists to control territory past the agreed ceasefire line under the terms of the Minsk agreements.

We again call on Russia to finally take steps now to implement the Minsk agreements in letter and spirit and not attempt to renegotiate what was agreed on September 5 and 19. Russia must end its support for violence in eastern Ukraine and withdraw all Russian weapons and fighters. Russia must use its influence on the separatists to release all hostages and it must release the hostages that it is holding inside of Russia, including Nadiya Savchenko and Oleg Sentsov. If Russia is interested in peace, why is it holding Ukrainian hostages within its borders? Russia must guarantee safe and unfettered access for OSCE monitors within the conflict zone, as well as along the Ukraine-Russia border. Russia must cooperate in securing and respecting the internationally-recognized Ukrainian-Russian border, returning Ukrainian sovereignty over its side of the border, and Russia must end its illegal occupation of Crimea.

The United States continues to support the challenging work being done by the SMM monitors, and we commend them for their professionalism, courage, and determination. We reiterate our call for all actors to ensure that the SMM be allowed to operate in a secure environment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.