

Original: ENGLISH



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

### **Response to Russia regarding the Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints at Gukovo and Donetsk**

As delivered by U.S. Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
June 16, 2016

I'd like to respond to some of the comments made by our distinguished Russian colleague.

First, the repeated claim that observation of the international border between Russia and Ukraine is only possible because of a goodwill gesture of the Russian Federation: our Ukrainian colleague has just recalled the sequence of events, and the fact that when the first invitation was made for this Mission there was a different situation on the ground. The other point— as he also alluded to — is that we agree that Russia made an invitation in July 2014, but subsequent to that, six weeks later, Russia signed an agreement to have international observation along the entire border and a security zone on both sides. So, as in many things diplomatically, even if it was initially offered as a “goodwill gesture”, it is now the subject of a commitment. And a commitment is not a goodwill gesture. The question is only whether a country makes good on the commitments it has made, and whether it is a credible international actor.

So, allowing full observation of the part of the international border that is not under the control of Ukraine is not a goodwill gesture anymore, it's a commitment that Russia has made and that it has failed to fulfill. And it's a commitment that is crucial to achieving long-term stability on the ground because until people can be confident that Russia isn't continuing to flood the area controlled by separatists in eastern Ukraine with weapons and fighters there will be a lack of confidence in the ceasefire. So this is a crucial part of implementing the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine.

And I don't think — our distinguished Ukrainian colleague has made this point already — but to say that our reading those words is somehow an interpretation. I don't claim to be a great interpreter of high politics but by just reading the words of the agreement that Russia signed in the Minsk Protocol— there's no interpretation there, the words are pretty clear.

Second, the point that our distinguished Russian colleague has made with regard to inspection — we've covered this before as well. First of all, it doesn't matter whether there's inspection: if they are going without the permission of Ukraine it's still a violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. But also, as we have heard multiple times in this body, neither the Observation Mission nor the Ukrainians are actually conducting a genuine inspection. They can visually check, and that is not an inspection; you can hide a ton of weapons, a ton of fuel behind cardboard boxes if you want to. So we can't have confidence of what is in those white-truck convoys. Now, if Russia wanted to prove that in those white-truck convoys were, as they say, humanitarian materials, there are plenty of international mechanisms that are well-established for delivering assistance in line with international procedures. The fact that Russia chooses not to is again evidence that they are hiding something.

Finally, the point that our distinguished Russian colleague made about having borders with 14 countries, and I mean this sincerely: the fact that Russia is violating the borders of at least two of these countries – meaning, with so many neighbors, almost 15 percent of them are having their borders violated by Russia – is concerning. And we discussed that in many contexts in this forum. But flipping it around: I can't for the life of me, looking at a map of the world, understand why a country that has as many borders, and as long of borders, as the Russian Federation, is the country that is undermining international rule of law about the respect for borders. It seems completely at odds with Russia's interests. And I think it's good that we focus on the fact that Russia has 14 neighbors, and that it has thousands and thousands of kilometers of borders. And Russia has a stake in restoring the rule of law internationally as it pertains to sovereignty and territorial integrity, and I hope that our Russian colleagues will be able to engage in dialogue with us in the future about how we can restore the respect for international law with respect to borders because it is as much in Russia's interest as anyone of our participating States.

Thank you.