



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 Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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The United States condemns, in the strongest terms, Russia's continued disregard for its international obligations and commitments which obstructs the path toward a peaceful and united future for Ukraine. The root of the problem in eastern Ukraine remains the same: Russia's flagrant violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and its failure to honor the pledges it made in Minsk.

Allow me to highlight a few recent examples of violations of OSCE principles and commitments, as well as the Minsk agreements, on the part of Russia and the separatists it backs: Russia has failed to remove all illegal military formations, equipment, and militants from Ukraine; separatists have taken advantage of the agreed-upon pause in fighting to expand their control of territory beyond the ceasefire lines agreed in Minsk; separatist attacks have increased significantly, notably on positions around Donetsk airport, Debaltseve, and Mariupol in Donetsk oblast, and northwest of Luhansk city in Luhansk oblast; Russia continues to violate Ukrainian airspace with its helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles; Russia has failed to help restore Ukrainian government control of Ukraine's side of the international border, and failed to allow the needed expansion of the Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk.

Mr. Chair, the United States condemns the Russian convoy of 20 vehicles that crossed the international border into Ukraine on November 16, again in violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. During last week's Permanent Council meeting, participating States voiced alarm at the previous crossing from Russia of over 80 cargo trucks, without Ukraine's permission or international inspection, purportedly to provide humanitarian aid.

Mr. Chair, we are concerned by reports of ongoing abuses in Crimea. On November 17, Human Rights Watch—an international NGO whose work has been previously cited by the Russian Federation here in the Permanent Council—released a report titled "Rights in Retreat" which documents the disturbing decline in the treatment of the inhabitants of Crimea since Russia began its occupation of the peninsula. The report outlines how the occupying "authorities" have limited free expression, restricted peaceful assembly, harassed those who oppose Russia's occupation, targeted Crimean Tatars and other minorities for abuse, and discriminated against Ukrainian citizens. As the title of the report indicates, rights in Crimea truly are "in retreat."

We also note the Human Rights Watch report's recommendations, one of which is that the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission be granted access to Crimea and establish a permanent presence there. We remind the Permanent Council that the mandate of the Special Monitoring Mission encompasses all of Ukraine, including Crimea. We reiterate that Crimea remains an integral part of Ukraine, and we call on Russia to end its occupation of Crimea.

There are no excuses for the ongoing and continuous breaches of the Minsk Protocol and Memorandum by Russia and its proxies. We call on the Russian government to stop fueling the fire with new weapons and support for the separatists, and to withdraw all Russian military personnel and equipment from Ukraine. If Russia is committed to the Minsk agreements, it will take action. It will also call on its proxies to implement all of the commitments they made. In line with the Minsk agreements, Russia and its proxies must stop ceasefire violations, release hostages, repudiate the illegal, bogus "elections" of November 2, and return the Ukrainian side of the international border to Ukrainian control.

We have previously stated that if Russia fully implements its commitments, including those made in Minsk, sanctions could be rolled back. If, instead, Russian authorities continue their aggressive and escalatory actions and violations of international law, we are prepared to deepen existing sanctions and consider imposing additional costs on Russia.

Mr. Chair, the United States continues to support Minsk and continues to call for its full implementation. We call on Russia to honor its international obligations and commitments, and end its illegal actions against Ukraine immediately.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.