



## 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  
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Thank you for convening us, and thank you to Ambassadors Apakan and Tagliavini, and their colleagues, for the work that you continue to do on behalf of all of us on the ground. Thank you also for your briefing today.

This is the fourth meeting of the Permanent Council in the last 12 days. The pace of our discussions is being driven by the ongoing offensive by Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine who have publicly announced their intention to continue fighting. In a year of ever-escalating violations by the Russian Federation and its proxies, recent days have brought a new level of destructive behavior.

Aleksandr Zakharchenko, the self-proclaimed leader of the “Donetsk People’s Republic” was videotaped on January 24 speaking at a memorial service for “DPR fighters”, where he stated: “today the offensive against Mariupol begins.” The crowd responded, “Glory to Russia!” Zakharchenko continued: “In a few days we will encircle Debaltseve.” This video can be seen online. Today, we received reports that Russia-backed separatists are attacking Ukrainian positions all around Debaltseve using a combination of artillery, tanks, and infantry, in what has been described as an attempt to encircle the town. The Russia-backed separatists have reportedly knocked out the electricity, gas, and heat in Debaltseve - municipal officials are attempting to restore service.

Mr. Chair, the separatists have undertaken their current offensive with the full support of the Russian Federation, despite the assurances we received last week in this Council that the Russian Federation is sincerely pursuing a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Colleagues, once again it is important to stop and recall that without the Kremlin’s active engagement, the tragedy unfolding would not be happening. This is a conflict fueled by Russia. As President Obama said yesterday, “We are deeply concerned about the latest break in the cease-fire and the aggression that these separatists – with Russian backing, Russian equipment, Russian financing, Russian training and Russian troops – are conducting. And we will continue to take the approach that we’ve taken in the past, which is to ratchet up the pressure on Russia.”

The cost of the Russia-supported offensive is clear. On January 24, the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in Ukraine reported that an “extremely heavy barrage” fired by a multiple-launch rocket system had landed in an area measuring over 1 square kilometer north-east of the Mariupol city-center, an area which included an open-air market. The SMM’s initial report stated that at least 20 people had died and 75 were wounded in this attack. The SMM assessment concluded that the attack had been carried out through the use of Grad and

Uragan rockets fired from areas controlled by the “Donetsk People’s Republic”. On January 25, the Ukrainian government reported that the toll from the attack had reached 30 dead and 102 wounded. 30 dead. Many world leaders have condemned this outrageous attack. We agree with Ambassador Apakan’s description of the shelling of Mariupol as: “a reckless, indiscriminate, and disgraceful attack aimed at a heavily-populated residential area whose victims included women, children, and the elderly.” The attack by multiple rockets in a civilian area in Mariupol appears to have been more than indiscriminate—it appears to have been specifically aimed at fomenting terror among the civilian population.

Mr. Chair, the Russia-backed separatists and the Russian Federation are responsible for this and other tragic incidents that have occurred throughout the months of fighting in eastern Ukraine. Had the Russia-backed separatists not taken up arms against the Ukrainian government, had Russia not provided the separatists with significant amounts of weapons and material, had Russia not sent its own military forces into Ukraine to support the separatists, we would never have come to see a situation like this, a tragic situation which we all hoped had been consigned to Europe’s past.

In the words of President Obama: “We have no interest in seeing Russia weakened or its economy in shambles. We have a profound interest, as I believe every country does, in promoting a core principle, which is, larger countries don’t bully smaller countries. They don’t encroach on their territorial integrity. They don’t encroach on their sovereignty. And that’s what’s at stake in Ukraine.” The President also announced that he is looking at all additional options, short of military confrontation, to raise the costs that Russia faces.

The United States does not want to take such a course. The choice to avoid this, however, is not ours. It is Russia’s. According to the Minsk agreements Russia signed, Russia must allow Ukraine to regain control of its side of the international border, and Russia must stop sending weapons and personnel across that border to support the separatists. We can confirm that since December, Russia has transferred hundreds of pieces of military equipment to pro-Russia separatists in eastern Ukraine, including tanks, armored vehicles, rocket systems, heavy artillery, and other military equipment. Russia must release all hostages and illegally detained persons, including member of the Verkhovna Rada, Nadiya Savchenko. And Russia must end its occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.