



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

### **Response to Ambassador Vaidotas Verba, OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
September 10, 2015

Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you, Ambassador Verba, for your report.

Ukraine's future is as a free, democratic, and prosperous European country, and reform is the way to realize this future. The Ukrainian government has made tremendous strides in implementing wide-ranging political, economic, and social reforms under extremely difficult circumstances. Russia's occupation of Crimea and Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine have harmed Ukraine's economy and threatened the country's political stability. Ukraine's leadership has exhibited exceptional courage by moving forward with challenging reforms despite these obstacles. Recently, for example, the Rada passed at first reading constitutional amendments on decentralization. Among other reforms, the government stood up the National Anticorruption Bureau of Ukraine, established new patrol police in several cities throughout the country, and adopted a package of anti-corruption laws. Following her trip to Ukraine, IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde praised the Ukrainian government's efforts so far as "astonishing" and "courageous," and said economic overhauls were starting to bear fruit.

The OSCE plays a vital role in Ukraine's successful reform campaign, and the United States applauds the OSCE Project Coordinator's keystone project: facilitating Ukraine's national dialogue on reform. Civil society and the public must not just understand and accept reforms, they must be active stakeholders participating in the process. The OSCE makes this possible by facilitating the participation of scholars, entrepreneurs, factory workers, small business owners, teachers, farmers, and youth – people from all walks of life – in a direct dialogue with the government of Ukraine about the prosperous and democratic future that they will build together.

We call upon the Project Coordinator to find creative ways to include people from all of Ukraine in this dialogue, including people displaced from separatist-controlled territories and Russia-occupied Crimea. We recognize that Ukrainian citizens living in occupied Crimea and in Russian-separatist-controlled territories have limited ability to take part in these discussions. The Project Coordinator should explore the use of technology such as live streaming, video teleconferencing, and social media to make the dialogue, and its results, accessible to more people of Ukraine. The Project Coordinator should also work with the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine to support the national dialogue in the areas near the line of contact.

The United States would like to recognize the contributions made by the Project Coordinator to help Ukrainian authorities deal with the legacy of land mines and unexploded ordinance, some of which date as far back as World War I. This includes work done in Crimea before Russia's occupation of the peninsula. The Project Coordinator's efforts to develop standards

for de-mining and to integrate geospatial mapping technology into de-mining efforts are particularly laudable and timely. We note with concern that since the initiation of Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine over a year ago, the amount of unexploded ordinance in the country has more than doubled. In light of the challenges faced by the Special Monitoring Mission to deal with land mines and unexploded ordinance, the Project Coordinator's experience offers yet another opportunity for partnership between these two OSCE field missions.

Mr. Chair, the United States recognizes that the Project Coordinator has made many contributions to the people of Ukraine over the years. The Project Coordinator should remain adaptable in its approach, allowing it to be responsive to opportunities across the security, economic, and human dimensions. The Project Coordinator's work in areas as diverse as transnational water resource management, anti-trafficking training for police, and support to Ukraine's elections are examples of this adaptability. We look forward to additional work undertaken by the OSCE Project Coordinator as it assists Ukraine in becoming a more democratic and prosperous society.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.