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Delegation of Switzerland

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF SWITZERLAND AT THE 1067th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

10 September 2015

On Ukraine

Mr. Chairperson,

Switzerland considers it an encouraging sign that the number of ceasefire violations has gone down dramatically over the past few days. This is a real chance that should not be wasted. If it now proves possible to begin a verifiable withdrawal of heavy weapons of all calibres and register them, then there are better prospects for a lasting ceasefire in eastern Ukraine.

It is also encouraging that the humanitarian situation has improved. Switzerland welcomes the opening of a humanitarian logistics centre and the resumption of rail transports. Nevertheless, there is still much to be done: we believe additional humanitarian logistics centres should be opened and the procedures simplified. Preparations must also be made now for the onset of winter. In a month's time it may already start getting cold.

Rapid and unrestricted access for humanitarian organizations is therefore to be ensured at all costs, not least because health care provision remains precarious.

Fortunately the new school year could start everywhere without incident. We call on all parties to do everything in their power so that children, teachers and parents are safe in school buildings and when making the journey to and from school.

The discussions in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups are also something positive in our view. We hope that the agreement regarding the withdrawal of tanks, artillery and mortars under 100 mm in calibre can now be concluded quickly. In order to continue the process it is also important that the dates for the elections announced unilaterally by the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic be cancelled and an agreement be reached on a common date for the elections. We should also like to point out that according to the Minsk Package of Measures the elections should be held in accordance with OSCE standards and on the basis of Ukrainian law. In this regard, we call on the participants in the working groups and the Trilateral Contact Group to take responsibility so that the talks in these forums quickly lead to greater trust and confidence and thus effective solutions.

A good example can be seen in the working group on humanitarian issues, where there has once again been progress in releasing prisoners. We hope that the current ceasefire will enable many more people to be freed.

A real threat to these positive developments, however, is the fact that large numbers of troops are still concentrated along the line of contact, notably near Volnovakha and Telmanove. Heavy weapons continue to be removed from arms depots and all too often patrols by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) are hindered in their work. Furthermore, it is unacceptable that the SMM has so far still been unable to get to the wreck of the drone downed as a result of jamming. We call on the relevant authorities of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and all those who have influence on them to ensure the SMM's immediate access to the crash site and to provide it with the necessary support in investigating the causes of the crash.

Esteemed colleagues,

We very much hope that the relative calm continues and the withdrawal of weapons is finally possible. Only in this way and with the unrestricted activity of the SMM can the necessary confidence be built for further progress towards peace in this conflict area. The current chances should therefore not be wasted.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.