



## United States Mission to the OSCE

# Ongoing Violations of International Law and Defiance of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation in Ukraine

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry Kamian  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
August 30, 2018

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The United States welcomes all efforts to bring a visible, verifiable, and lasting ceasefire to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Progress in implementing the Minsk agreements, which remain as the only agreed upon path to peace in the Donbas, can only be achieved in the wake of a true ceasefire. The United States once again calls on Russia to take the initial steps to order a credible cease-fire and disengage its forces in the Donbas. Such moves would build confidence that Russia-led forces are serious about moving toward a lasting peace. Russia is stoking this conflict; it should take the first steps to improve security conditions on the ground and end the bloodshed.

Mr. Chair, since we last gathered, the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) has continued its tireless efforts to bear witness to all sides of the conflict. Our monitors carry out their duties in the face of harassment and threats from Russia-led forces that continue despite condemnation from this very Council. In the August 14 daily report, the SMM informed us that Russia-led forces west of Luhansk fired 12 shots at an SMM mini-UAV. On August 13, the SMM wrote in its daily report of an armed patrol in a Russia-controlled area northeast of Mariupol refusing to allow an SMM patrol to fly its mini-UAV. Such actions are a clear violation of the SMM's mandate.

On August 12, an SMM long-range UAV spotted six Grad multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) in a Russia-controlled area southwest of Luhansk. On August 10, again in an area controlled by Russia's proxy forces, an SMM mini-UAV spotted 18 artillery pieces with 775 ammunition crates, as well as 118 crates of MLRS rockets. Regrettably, Mr. Chair, these lethal weapons are regularly deployed in areas with significant civilian populations, bringing drastic consequences.

Mr. Chair, we have heard time and time again Russia deny its role in manufacturing the conflict over four years, yet additional evidence of its involvement continues to come to light. On July 28, an SMM mini-UAV spotted for the very first time *four distinct electronic warfare systems*, each newly designed and manufactured by Russia. For years now Russia has repeated its tired line that forces in Russia-controlled areas of Ukraine are fighting Ukrainian forces by using pre-existing stocks of arms and material captured during the initial

stages of combat. However, pre-existing stocks did not contain state of the art and expensive systems like those mentioned earlier. Ironically, the truth may very well have been discovered by an SMM long-range UAV – the very device that the newly discovered electronic warfare systems seek to render useless. On August 9, the SMM reported convoys of trucks crossing the internationally recognized border of Russia and Ukraine via a dirt track after nightfall in a Russia-controlled area east of Donetsk. The contents of these trucks, as well as the contents of the so-called “humanitarian convoy” that crossed from Russia to Ukraine on August 23, are unknown to us – and it is evident Moscow *does not want us to know*. Russia can stop these purported humanitarian convoys anytime. Such behavior is the reason why the SMM must have complete and unhindered access to the totality of the internationally recognized border between Russia and Ukraine.

Mr. Chair, since we last met, regrettably there has been no improvement in the treatment of SMM monitors, especially in Russia-controlled areas – our monitors continue to be harassed and sometimes threatened with violence for fulfilling their mandate. The SMM remains critical to our efforts in Ukraine. The United States repeats its call on Russia to cease this campaign of violence, threats, and intimidation against our monitors, who are only seeking to fulfill the Mission’s mandate. A mandate that, as we know, was agreed upon by each and every participating State here.

Mr. Chair, we again demand the release of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalist Stanislav Aseyev, who has been imprisoned by Russia-led forces in the so-called “Donetsk People’s Republic” since June 2017. On August 17, Russian state propaganda television aired a videotape of a pale, gaunt, and clearly frightened Aseyev, raising concern that he may have been abused.

As United States Secretary of State Pompeo made clear in his July 25 Senate testimony, the United States continues to fully support Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We do not, nor will we ever, recognize Russia’s purported annexation of Crimea, in which it sought to undermine a bedrock international principle: that no country can change the borders of another by force.

We join our European and other partners in affirming that our Minsk-related sanctions against Russia will remain in place until Russia fully implements its Minsk commitments. The separate, Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.