



## **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 prepared for delivery by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i Harry Kamian  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
February 15, 2018

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As we gather this week, as our esteemed Ukrainian colleague reminded us, we mark the passing of three years since the signing of the Minsk Package of Measures. The agreement was signed just as Russian-led troops, tanks, and artillery were pushing further and further west into sovereign Ukrainian territory. The sides agreed to “an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire” on February 12, 2015, but Russia-led forces promptly ignored the ceasefire and launched a ferocious artillery barrage against the city of Debaltseve, eventually capturing it and over 1,500 square kilometers beyond the agreed Minsk Line of Contact, while killing numerous Ukrainian soldiers and civilians in the process. For over three years now, we have had this and other agreements that outline a path out of this conflict. And, for three years, we have watched Russia-led forces contravene the most fundamental element of the agreement, namely an immediate and full ceasefire along the line of contact, while Russia continues to stoke the conflict.

Today, the fighting is heaviest around Svitlodarsk, where the SMM recorded 65 percent of the ceasefire violations in its February 7 weekly report. According to the report, the latest fighting there involved the use of highly destructive multiple launch rocket systems. These systems were originally conceived to destroy large concentrations of soldiers and equipment in major conflicts, effectively scorching a one thousand meter-square area when they are fired. Mr. Chair, it is these conditions that Ukrainian civilians caught in the crossfire must endure. We again call on the sides to prioritize measures to ease the suffering of civilians on both sides of the line of contact. These measures must begin with a full and complete ceasefire, a withdrawal of weapons, and a disengagement of forces. Civilian hardship and suffering can also be reduced through the opening of additional crossing points along the line of contact.

In his response to Ambassador Varga earlier this morning, our esteemed Russian colleague expressed concern over the suffering of the civilian population in eastern Ukraine. If the Russian Federation is indeed genuinely concerned about the wellbeing of the civilian population there, I think it is important for the international community to see how such words can or will be translated into action. And we once again join the rest of the international community in calling on the Russian Federation to use its power over the forces

that it arms, trains, leads, and fights alongside to support, rather than subvert, the efforts to ease the suffering.

On February 11, we received reports of sustained shelling at the Donetsk Filtration Station. This latest round of firing caused damage to a boundary wall and windows in the facility's main building. Fortunately, no staff were injured and the station continues to operate, supplying clean water to 345,000 people in the surrounding area. The United States reiterates its calls for the establishment of safety zones around critical humanitarian infrastructure, such as the Donetsk Filtration Station.

Mr. Chair, the United States notes with concern four instances since February 3 of small-arms fire directed towards SMM UAVs in government-controlled areas, primarily in Svitlodarsk. This is not the first time the SMM has reported the targeting of its UAV assets there. However, according to SMM reporting, the vast majority of these acts have occurred in areas controlled by Russia-led forces. The United States roundly condemns the deliberate targeting of SMM patrols and equipment, and calls on all sides to ensure access and safety for monitors and their equipment.

Regrettably, Mr. Chair, the actions against the SMM are not limited to the targeting of their UAVs. On February 10, the SMM reported that two armed so-called "DPR" militants fired warning shots at an SMM patrol that had stopped in an area militants said "was not allowed." In the February 7 weekly report, the SMM reported how so-called "DPR" militants at a particular checkpoint regularly restrict the passage of SMM patrols. Seven times in a row, these militants imposed serious restrictions on the Mission's monitoring activities. These actions are in direct contravention of the SMM's mandate, as well as the Minsk agreements, in which the signatories agreed to ensure secure and safe access for the SMM, and to respond rapidly to specific violations that have been reported by the Mission. We call on Russia to use its influence over the forces it arms, trains, leads, and fights alongside to end this campaign of interference that restricts the SMM's mandate.

The United States also repeats its calls for Russia to return to the Joint Center for Control and Coordination, an important body used to broker temporary periods of silence, ceasefires, and safety zones around critical infrastructure, which it abruptly left on December 19.

According to conservative figures released by the Crimean Tatar Resource Center, in 2017 occupying Russian security forces killed at least four people, took 16 political prisoners, caused 16 disappearances, detained 286 people, conducted 62 searches, made 46 arrests, and levied 104 fines against people simply for speaking out against Russia's occupation of Crimea. Most of the victims were Crimean Tatars. Russia should end its repeated baseless attempts to paint this brave, principled, and peaceful community as a group of "terrorists" and "extremists." Just this week, on February 8, a Russian-controlled court extended the detention of four Crimean Tatars from Bakhchisaray to April 2018. They are on trial for allegedly belonging to the Islamic group Hizb-ut-Tahrir, which is legal in Ukraine. The following day, on February 9, the Russia-controlled Supreme Court extended the detentions of five Crimean Tatars from Simferopol for two more months, also on charges of allegedly belonging to Hizb-ut-Tahrir. Enver Mamutov, Rustem Abiltarov, Zavri Abseitov and Remzi Memetov have been in detention since May 2016, while Teymur Abdullayev, Uzeyir Abdullayev, Aider Saledinov, Rustem Ismailov and Emil Dzhemadenov have been in detention since October 2016, on fabricated charges of terrorism and extremism. We call on Russia to end its oppression of Crimean Tatars and its occupation of Crimea.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, the United States fully supports Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally-recognized borders. The United States does not, nor will we ever, recognize Russia's occupation and purported annexation of Crimea. Crimea-related sanctions on Russia will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine. And we join our European and other partners in restating that our sanctions against Russia for its aggression in eastern Ukraine will remain until Russia fully implements its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.