



United States Mission to the OSCE

U.S. Response to President of the ICRC Peter Maurer

As delivered by Political Counselor Gregory Macris
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 14, 2019

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

President Maurer, the United States welcomes you to the Permanent Council, and thanks you for your remarks and thoughtful recommendations on behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). We very much value the work of the ICRC to promote respect for international humanitarian law. Efforts such as yours further the international community's collaborative efforts to prevent and respond to conflicts.

The United States appreciates the efforts the ICRC has made to preserve dignity and protect lives in situations of armed conflict around the world, including in the OSCE region. Sadly, millions of people around the globe require assistance.

The ICRC's work facilitating prisoner exchanges helps build trust at the local level. Your work to clarify the fate of missing persons, visit detainees, restore family links, and facilitate the return of remains dovetail with the Slovak Chairmanship's priority to relieve human suffering due to conflict. Where conflicts are largely resolved, the ICRC's humanitarian assistance plays a key role in rebuilding societies.

The United States commends the ICRC for its ongoing efforts to ease the suffering of the civilians affected by the conflict in Ukraine's Donbas region. With its large presence, access, and insight into the needs and challenges of Ukraine's conflict-affected populations, the ICRC has made unique contributions to this area. We share your views about the complementary roles of the ICRC as a neutral humanitarian intermediary and the OSCE as peace negotiator. The disengagement zones in Zolote and Petrivske, brokered with support from the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM), and the ICRC's work to provide assistance to civilians in these areas are prime examples of how our organizations' work complements each other. We echo the ICRC's calls for more entry-exit points along the line of contact, for protection of the water supply infrastructure in Donbas, and for facilitated pension payments to the elderly caught behind enemy lines. We commend the courage of your staff in delivering life-saving humanitarian assistance to people living in the conflict zone, including in non-government controlled areas.

President Maurer, the ICRC's work with Armenia and Azerbaijan to exchange information on missing persons is another good example of ways the organizations we represent can work

together to further humanitarian objectives. The Minsk Group Co-Chairs' political work, together with the practical work of the ICRC to identify and exchange data on missing persons, helps build confidence and an environment conducive to peace talks. Likewise, the ICRC's work to identify, exhume, and return the remains of missing persons in Georgia reinforces work being done in the Geneva International Discussions and by the *Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms* to improve stability on the ground.

We appreciate the ICRC's work in the Western Balkans to facilitate regional efforts to locate and identify missing persons. We call on Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo to collaborate productively on these efforts. To move forward, senior leaders in the region will need to revitalize the working groups and commissions that facilitate location and identification of missing persons.

In conclusion, I want to thank you and the dedicated corps of humanitarian professionals of the International Committee of the Red Cross for their tireless and lifesaving work. The work you do—and the outcomes you produce—are intrinsically connected to the achievement of comprehensive security that is the goal of the OSCE.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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