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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. Courtney Austrian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 22, 2021

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

At last week’s Permanent Council meeting, several participating States referred to the July 12 article attributed to Vladimir Putin on the topic of Ukraine. The United States made quite clear last week our thoughts on its untruthful characterizations and assertions, calculated to provoke, and its attempt to undermine Ukraine’s sovereignty and dismiss the right of the Ukrainian people to chart their own political future. But one needs time to really delve into all the gems in this piece.

President Putin wrote Russia was “open to dialogue with Ukraine and ready to discuss the most complex issues.” We regret Mr. Putin’s alleged promise of open dialogue has yet to be demonstrated in reality. What we have witnessed is Russian obstructionism in the Trilateral Contact Group, and let me be clear we think the Trilateral Contact Group is Russia, Ukraine, and OSCE, and other Minsk negotiations, and its lack of transparency and deliberate peddling of disinformation at international bodies, including the OSCE.

Russia’s representative at this Permanent Council last week referred to the United States as “the overseer” of the current Ukrainian government. That comment is insulting to the people of Ukraine and its elected leaders. The United States and other participating States in this Chamber fully support Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. Russia’s actions show it does not.

Last week, our Russian colleague again tried to obfuscate his nation’s responsibility in the conflict by claiming Ukraine has not adhered to the Minsk agreements. He failed to recall that seven years ago in Minsk, President Putin promised the war would end, all troops would be withdrawn, and all prisoners would be released. Russia has so far not fulfilled its promise, and we continue to call on Russia to end the war it started eastern Ukraine.

The President of Russia wrote Russia “respect[s] the Ukrainians’ desire to see their country free, safe, and prosperous.” He knows full well that aspiration cannot be fully realized as long as Russia-led forces continue to wreak havoc in the Donbas and occupy Crimea. Indeed, the whole aim of the Kremlin’s aggression in Ukraine is thwarting Ukraine’s aspirations.

If Russia wishes to be seen as a partner, Russia needs to act responsibly and fulfill its promises. Under the Minsk agreements Russia committed to recalling its forces and equipment from eastern Ukraine.

Russia—and the forces it arms, trains, leads, and fights alongside—are to cooperate with the OSCE’s Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) and cease harassing its monitors and assets.

We also call your attention to the report released earlier this month by the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, which notes that arbitrary detention “remains a daily occurrence” and “torture and ill treatment were carried out systematically” in detention centers in the Russian-controlled areas of Donbas.

In occupied Crimea, there are reports that the population is subjected to harassment and intimidation through arbitrary arrests, unlawful raids of homes and businesses, fabricated extremism charges, and coerced confessions under torture and other severe abuses. We remain concerned about the case of RFE/RL journalist Vladyslav Yesypenko, who is facing charges that could land him up to 18 years imprisonment on fabricated charges in connection to his journalistic activities. We urgently call on Russia to cease its repression of Crimeans and release these political prisoners.

The United States fully supports Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, extending to its territorial waters. We do not, nor will we ever, recognize Russia’s purported annexation of Crimea.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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