

PC.DEL/1089/14
18 September 2014

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1017th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

18 September 2014

**On the situation in Ukraine and the continuing violations of the
norms of international humanitarian law during the
punitive operation in eastern Ukraine**

Mr. Chairperson,

As has already been mentioned, the protocol signed in Minsk on 5 September regarding joint steps aimed at stabilizing the Ukrainian crisis is an important step in the process of a peaceful settlement. It should serve as a basis for internal Ukrainian political dialogue with a view to achieving national harmony. The parties will later agree on the order of priority and modalities for implementing the measures set out in the Minsk Protocol.

Russia is providing active assistance in creating favourable conditions for a peaceful solution to the serious problems facing Ukraine. Regular contacts are maintained with the Ukrainian leadership at the highest level.

There is a real chance of putting a stop to the fratricidal war unleashed by the authorities in Kyiv. Alongside maintaining the truce, it is necessary to begin substantive, open and inclusive dialogue within Ukraine as soon as possible involving representatives of all regions and all political forces. Within the framework of this dialogue, agreement should be reached on an entire range of questions concerning constitutional order and the future of the country, in which all nationalities, minorities and regions would live in comfort and safety and where human rights would be respected in full measure.

Despite isolated incidents, the ceasefire regime is being observed for the most part. A mechanism has been established to exchange information on such incidents and to investigate them. We draw attention to the reports regarding a dangerous concentration of heavy armaments of the Ukrainian security forces in certain regions, in particular in Debaltseve.

We note that refugees have begun to return to the conflict zone, and the infrastructure is gradually being restored. Nevertheless, the humanitarian situation remains catastrophic. Many international organizations – the United Nations, including the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the International Committee of the Red Cross

and the Council of Europe – share our assessments. It has been confirmed that Kyiv has actively employed heavy artillery, aircraft, multiple-launch rocket systems and even ballistic missiles and phosphorous bombs against major cities and other towns and villages. Around 3,000 people have been killed as a result, and more than 5,000 wounded, including many children. Two hundred and forty schools have been destroyed and some 270,000 children are unable to attend school. Thirty-two hospitals are out of operation, and medicines are in short supply. According to the United Nations, 2.2 million people remain in the conflict zone. Many are still living in cellars without electricity and do not have enough food and water. In Luhansk, around 250,000 people have been without water for more than a month now.

There is the urgent problem of providing people with heated housing and essential items as winter approaches. Consequently, aid is required quickly and on a large scale. We shall continue to provide humanitarian aid to the affected regions. To obstruct this aid is cynical; to call for this aid to be stopped is even more cynical. Russia has shown its complete readiness to co-operate in any way both with the Ukrainian authorities and with international humanitarian agencies. We invited the Ukrainian border guards and customs officers present at the Donetsk border crossing point, through which the second humanitarian convoy passed, to inspect the cargo. They declined.

Over the past five months, around 850,000 Ukrainian citizens have moved to the territory of the Russian Federation. Some 350,000 have applied for refugee status, temporary asylum or participation in the programme for voluntary resettlement of compatriots. More than 57,000 people are housed in the temporary shelters that have been set up on Russian territory.

The large-scale violations of the norms of international humanitarian law during the punitive operation, to which we have constantly been drawing our colleagues' attention, require a response. Even the international observer missions and international human rights organizations cannot ignore them any longer. It is becoming increasingly clear that the widespread assertions that the deterioration of the human rights situation is due to the activities of the militias is untenable. The excesses by the Aidar punitive battalion recorded by Amnesty International representatives – kidnappings, unlawful arrests, beatings, extortion, including demands for ransom to secure the release of captured Ukrainians, run-of-the-mill robberies committed against civilians – are just the tip of the iceberg. The matter of investigation of crimes resulting in massive loss of life on the Maidan, in Odessa, in Mariupol and the circumstances surrounding the crash of the Malaysia Airlines aeroplane has still not been resolved.

The actions of various radical groups, which, under the pretext of “fighting separatists”, commit countless crimes, go unpunished across the country. Persons forced to flee the conflict zone also suffer as a result of this.

Systematic and decisive action by the Ukrainian authorities to counter radical, nationalistic and at times openly neo-Nazi groups is essential if civil peace and harmony are to be established in Ukraine. We shall closely monitor the way in which the Ukrainian leadership follows up on its assurances that crimes committed by members of the volunteer battalions will be investigated.

In the interests of preventing further escalation of the situation in Ukraine, it is extremely important that all external players without exception show restraint. Unfortunately,

this cannot be said about the actions of some of our Western partners, who instead of providing assistance and helping to stabilize the situation simply stand back and attempt to place all the blame for what is happening on Russia. Russia does not owe anyone anything, especially the United States of America, and our United States colleague's mantra-like utterances of "Russia must do..." are inappropriate here.

Any belligerent statements and actions are extremely counter-productive now. The regrouping of security forces, their concentration, preparation for the next "final" stage of the "anti-terrorist operation" and calls for ethnic cleansing of the territory during the truce are all very dangerous steps likely to destroy the fragile truce.

On the contrary, now work is needed without delay on changes to the Ukrainian Constitution and on the reform of legislation and the judicial authorities. The law adopted by the Verkhovna Rada on special arrangements for local self-government in some regions of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts is a step in the right direction and in keeping with the spirit of the agreements set out in the Geneva statement by Russia, Ukraine, the United States and the European Union of 17 April 2014, and also of the Berlin declaration of 2 July 2014. Its aim is to create the conditions needed to restore normal life in the region and ensure that the constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens are respected. We welcome the provisions of the law that will guarantee the right to linguistic self-determination of every inhabitant of these regions and the development of cross-border co-operation aimed at strengthening good-neighbourly relations with the administrative territorial entities of the Russian Federation.

All this provides a basis for the launch of a substantive constitutional process in Ukraine, including the start of dialogue to promote national reconciliation and harmony in the country.

We trust that all the provisions of this law will be implemented in a responsible manner. Attempts by certain political groups to have the law repealed or to change its substance will once again push the situation towards confrontation.

Thank you for your attention.