



United States Mission to the OSCE
**Reply to UN USG for Political Affairs
Jeffrey Feltman and UN ASG for Human
Rights Ivan Šimonović**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Special Permanent Council, Vienna
September 8, 2014

The United States warmly welcomes Under Secretary General Feltman and Assistant Secretary General Šimonović to the Permanent Council – I've had the good fortune to get to know both of you individually and I have come to deeply admire your commitment to principle. We greatly appreciate your addressing an urgent topic that seizes our active attention here in Vienna and that of our deployed missions on the ground: the crisis in Ukraine—a crisis that, contrary to the Kremlin's assertions otherwise, is not an internal affair, but one that started with Russian interference and has escalated with that country's increasingly aggressive behavior.

While the United States welcomed the news from Minsk of a ceasefire reached as one of the results of a meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group, there are worrying signs that Russia-backed separatists continue to fight, particularly around Mariupol and the airport outside of Donetsk city. Our preference has always been for Russia and Ukraine to find a mutually acceptable, peaceful resolution to the crisis that Russia has been fomenting. As President Obama said last Friday in Wales, peace can only be advanced if there is follow-through on the ground and we look to Russia and the separatists it supports for full, swift, and transparent implementation of the cease-fire with adequate international monitoring.

At last week's NATO summit, the international community once again showed its united and unwavering stance against Russia's aggression in Ukraine, and showed its support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Twenty-eight nations stood together to formally voice and recognize what we all know to be true: Russian armed forces have been and are engaged in direct military operations in Ukraine, and that Russia continues to supply weapons and arm separatists in eastern Ukraine. Russia's incursions undermine the security of Ukraine, and cause serious security implications for the entire Euro-Atlantic area. Despite numerous eyewitness accounts and satellite imagery that pinpoint Russia's responsibility for the violence in eastern Ukraine, Kremlin officials continue to deny that Russian troops and equipment are inside Ukraine. They deny these facts even as Russian soldiers have died within Ukraine's borders. This denial defies comprehension, and does a great disservice to the people of Russia, who deserve to know the truth. Russia seems intent on isolating itself and behaving in contravention to the most fundamental norms of international conduct.

We continue to call on Russia to immediately stop its military aggression in Ukraine, withdraw all military forces and equipment from inside Ukraine and away from its border, end support for the separatist forces in eastern Ukraine, and end its illegal occupation of Crimea. Russia must respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Throughout the crisis in Ukraine, the OSCE—through its institutions, field missions, personnel and expertise—has played a leading role in Ukraine, with the aim of supporting a stable and democratic future for the people of Ukraine. Under the agreement reached on Friday in Minsk, the OSCE will continue to play a key role in monitoring and verifying the ceasefire. We applaud and support the work of the OSCE as it conducts the Special Monitoring Mission and the Border Observation Mission at the Checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk, and prepares to support Ukraine’s October parliamentary elections. We also recognize the OSCE’s earlier contributions in Ukraine, such as support for Ukraine’s National Unity Roundtables, the Human Rights Assessment Mission, the Vienna Document Observation teams, the OSCE’s largest-ever election observation mission for the presidential election, and numerous visits from the Secretary General, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the High Commissioner on National Minorities. These senior officials were some of the first and only international representatives to access Crimea before the Russian occupation.

And we will never forget the work of the OSCE monitors and their Ukrainian interpreters who endured abduction and captivity after being kidnapped by the Russia-supported separatists. Even so, the SMM continued to tirelessly carry out its work on behalf of this Organization and in support of security and stability. The United States supports the OSCE’s robust engagement in Ukraine and urges that participating States remain strong in countering the dangerous and destabilizing acts that threaten the very founding principles of this Organization.

Assistant Secretary General Šimonović, the recent release of your fifth human rights report on Ukraine highlights, once again, the atrocious human costs this crisis is inflicting on the people of Ukraine. We mourn with the families and loved ones of the estimated 2,729 people who have been killed in Ukraine since April, not counting those on flight MH 17, —tragic losses that Russia has the power and responsibility to stop now. We condemn and call for an end to all violations of international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict. We note that the wide array of abductions, physical and psychological torture, and ill-treatment of detainees were committed primarily by the armed groups in Donetsk and Luhansk. Previous OHCHR reports, and your previous intervention at the OSCE, catalogued many of these atrocities. We also use this opportunity to reiterate our outrage at the treatment of the Ukrainian pilot, Nadya Savchenko.

The United States supports the Ukrainian government’s right to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity against continued Russian military interventions. We also call on the government of Ukraine to continue to exercise the utmost restraint in the conduct of its Anti-Terrorism Operation. We call on Ukraine to investigate carefully any credible allegations of misconduct, including acts that may be inconsistent with international law. We also call on all sides in the conflict to take steps to avoid civilian casualties.

We recognize that the humanitarian situation in areas controlled by the armed separatists has worsened dramatically and that the Ukrainian government’s humanitarian aid convoy could not deliver the much-needed assistance in Luhansk on August 15, due to the Russia-backed separatists’ control of the area. The government of Ukraine has shown its commitment to provide humanitarian relief to its people with the support of the international community, while Russia’s “white trucks convoy” illegally entered Ukraine without ICRC escort. We

urge Russia to coordinate any humanitarian assistance with Ukraine and the IRCC on and to exert its considerable influence on the separatists impeding the delivery of assistance.

Under Secretary General Feltman, we thank you and Assistant Secretary General Šimonović for addressing the UN-OSCE collaboration and partnership through your briefings here today. We appreciate that in this time of crisis—as Russia continues to ignore OSCE principles and commitments in Ukraine—we are able to rely even more on the close collaboration between these two organizations. I know that you have made several trips over the recent months, and that your engagement has been a source of confidence for all. We appreciate the many briefings that high-level UN officials have given this Organization since the crisis began. The United States recognizes that UN-OSCE cooperation has been underpinned by a strong and collaborative relationship and mutually-reinforcing commitments. The United States will continue to support joint UN-OSCE endeavors to ensure that we maximize synergies and provide effective use of resources.

Mr. Feltman and Mr. Šimonović, thank you again for spending this time with us today and for your insightful and thoughtful remarks. We are proud to work alongside you and help promote the mutually reinforcing principles of the United Nations and of this Organization.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.