



United States Mission to the OSCE

Reply to the Russian Federation on Ongoing Violations of International Law and Defiance of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation in Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 3, 2016

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I, too, wanted to respond to some of the comments made by our distinguished Russian colleague.

First, to remind all colleagues around this table about SMM reporting, which we value highly and study closely. For many months now, SMM reporting -- obviously, as folks know, the SMM can only report things that it observes -- and for many months now, SMM reporting has reflected the greater access that the SMM has on the Ukrainian government controlled side of the line of contact.

Also, we should all remember that the Ukrainian positions are defensive, and Ukraine has been transparent about telling the SMM that it has been forced, in some cases, to take weapons that it had put into storage out of storage because of ongoing attacks by Russian-led separatist forces along the line of contact. So it is not surprising that the SMM -- because it has greater access on the Ukrainian side of the line and because the Ukrainians have made clear that they have been forced to pull weapons out of storage -- sees these weapons.

In contrast, the SMM continues to be limited in its access to Russian-led separatist-controlled areas, so it is not able to see the weapons depots and the places where Russia stores Russian weaponry on Ukrainian territory. And the SMM, as we know, does not have 24-hour access to the disengagement areas, nor does it have UAVs -- because of Russian-led separatist forces' jamming and shootdowns.

Which leads to my second point, which is about the disengagement area Stanytsia Luhanska. As I said this morning, my delegation places a high priority on seeing disengagement happen at Stanytsia Luhanska. But it is not serious for the Russian Federation and its proxies to say that they are ready for disengagement when overnight they are allegedly launching new attacks on Ukrainian positions. Again, these are defensive Ukrainian positions, and there is a prerequisite that there be seven days of ceasefire. So when Russian-led separatist forces launch an attack on

the last of those seven days, in an attempt to reset the clock, and then fire off flares and say, “we’re ready, we’re ready,” that does not demonstrate seriousness in terms of a commitment to disengagement.

Third, I would like to point out -- just in case people had stopped listening by this point -- that our distinguished Russian colleague was recycling old lies that we’ve heard before in this forum about the Russian language. Anybody who knows Ukraine or who has been to Ukraine - - you don’t even have to speak the Russian language to understand that the Russian language is spoken all over Ukraine, by people in Ukraine, to people in Ukraine, without consequence.

But I wanted to note that, after repeating that untrue statement, our distinguished Russian colleague said that “the public is having a single point of view forced upon them.” He also said that this leads to distortions of history.

And I would just point out that this is, once again, an instance of projection -- where if you want to know what the Russian Federation is doing wrong itself, you must simply look at what it accuses others of doing. The entire Russian population is having a single point of view forced upon it by state-controlled media. And the entire Russian population, and indeed the rest of the world, is repeatedly subjected to distortions of history by the organs of the Russian government.

Fourth, with respect to civilian deaths, there is no question that every death, civilian or military, that is happening in any conflict anywhere -- and that goes for the conflict in eastern Ukraine -- is a tragedy. And I hope that, every time Russian officials get reports that outline additional deaths, they think, “This, too, is a consequence of the actions of my government.”

And I hope that every time the Ukrainian government looks at the SMM reporting or other reporting, and sees that there have been additional civilian deaths, whether on Ukrainian government-controlled territory or on the territory controlled by Russian-led separatist forces, that the Ukrainian government redoubles its efforts to see that it is repulsing Russian aggression in a way that is consistent with principles of discrimination and due care to avoid harm to civilians.

All actors on the ground should be taking those steps -- to apply principles of discrimination and purposeful avoidance of harm to civilians.

Fifth, our distinguished Russian colleague said in reference to one of the incidents that he brought up that, “perpetrators of this war crime should be identified and held to account.” And let us apply that principle generally -- because I think that is a good statement that we should all be able to get behind -- that perpetrators of war crimes should be identified and held to account.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.