



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. Harry Kamian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 9, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The United States notes with great concern that the fighting fomented by Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine is again on the verge of causing a significant humanitarian disaster. As you noted in your opening statement, Mr. Chair, on the evenings of November 2, 3, and 4, the Donetsk Water Filtration Station was damaged by shelling. These attacks were not random. At one point, the effects of the fire that resulted ruptured a chlorine gas pipe. Only by a stroke of luck was the pipe not in use at the time, preventing a chlorine gas leak. If it had been in use, or if any of the 900 kilogram chlorine-gas bottles stored nearby had been punctured, the effects could have been catastrophic. The rupture of one chlorine container would kill anyone within a 200-meter radius. Villages nearby could also be significantly affected by prevailing winds blowing the poisonous gas. There are at least seven similar filtration stations close to the line of contact. As many of the participating States know, Stephen O'Brien, the UN's Under Secretary General and emergency relief coordinator, previously warned that such an event "would have disastrous humanitarian consequences in a highly industrialized part of Europe."

In addition to the hazards posed by the poisonous gas, any disruption in the operation of the Donetsk facility would be immediately felt by the over 350,000 people it services. The attack on this facility is unacceptable, and comes after several months without shelling near this site. The United States takes note of the November 4 statement by The Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), Ambassador Martin Sajdik, and echoes his condemnation of the attacks. We call on all sides to cease attacks on civilian infrastructure, and to commit to the creation of safety zones around critical infrastructure – a long held goal of the TCG. The United States reiterates its

calls on Russia and the anti-government forces it continues to arm, train, lead, and fight alongside, to obtain serious commitments to a full ceasefire, and to guarantee the security for TCG and SMM efforts to keep critical civilian infrastructure safe and operational.

The United States notes the refusal by so-called “DPR” militants to provide security guarantees for maintenance of an important SMM camera. This is part of their deliberate efforts to impede SMM operations in the south of Donetsk. These same forces also refused to provide security guarantees to enable the installation of acoustic sensors. In particular, we note that on the evening of October 24-25, the one night of the week that the camera was functional, it recorded over three times the number of projectiles fired from the direction of Russia’s forces than from government-controlled areas. The reluctance to provide access for this camera appears rooted in the desire of Russia to further mask its destructive role in the conflict.

Mr. Chair, the United States calls upon Russia and its proxies to immediately stop their restriction of, and interference with, SMM patrols, equipment, and monitoring capabilities. In addition, there are continuing reports of threats to monitors by so-called “DPR” and “LPR” militants. Mr. Chair, these threats must end. We call on Russia and its proxies in eastern Ukraine to cease these threats and provide for full, free, and safe access for the SMM to be able to fulfill its mandate.

In Crimea, the serious abuse faced by Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians, and any groups or individuals that the Russian Federation suspects of opposing its occupation, continues unabated. We welcome the visit of the Ukrainian Consul to Crimean Tatar Ruslan Zeytullaev, who was sentenced in July by the Russian Supreme Court to 15 years imprisonment for alleged involvement with Hizb ut-Tahrir, an organization which operates legally in Ukraine. The United States reiterates, once again, its calls for the release of all Ukrainian citizens illegally held or sentenced in Russia.

Mr. Chair, the United States, in conclusion, again calls upon Russia to end its repressive actions in occupied Crimea and return control of the peninsula to Ukraine. The United States fully supports Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally-recognized borders. We do not, nor will we ever, recognize Russia’s purported annexation of Crimea. Crimea-related sanctions on Russia will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine. We join our European and other partners in restating that our sanctions against Russia for its aggression in eastern Ukraine will remain until Russia fully implements its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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