



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Project Coordinator in Ukraine, Ambassador Henrik Villadsen

As delivered by Ambassador James S. Gilmore III
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 18, 2020

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you very much for allowing the group to work hybrid, I am taking advantage of that opportunity, obviously, and I am very grateful for your leadership on this, as we begin to move all of us back to the Hofburg in the near future.

Ambassador Villadsen, the United States welcomes you back virtually to the Permanent Council. We appreciate your insightful briefing on your work as the Project Coordinator in Ukraine (PCU) and welcome the extension of the PCU's mandate. We applaud your launching of a three-year Gender Strategy to promote gender mainstreaming throughout your Mission's programs, which, according to your report, is quite successful.

The United States recognizes you and your team's continuing efforts to work in conjunction with the Ukrainian government and civil society on wide-ranging democratic, judicial, economic, and social reforms. The United States underscores that progress in the fight against corruption and other key reforms remains essential to Ukraine's prosperity, security, and democracy.

Ukraine, I think is coming along very well, is doing well. And we are very proud of the progress they are making. And you, and your mission are, no doubt, helpful in that long-term endeavour.

We recognize that the most recent reporting period likely represented one of the most – if not the most – challenging periods for the PCU. As Ukraine implemented stringent measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, you and your staff reacted swiftly to perform risk analyses and apply mitigation measures to all your projects while prioritizing the safety and health of your team members. In keeping with its mission to support the work of the Ukrainian government, your office provided thousands of medical masks to regional social service providers and helped raise public awareness of the pandemic. You strengthened the PCU's efforts to reduce domestic violence, which many countries reported has increased during periods of lockdown.

These initiatives, coupled with the strategic manner in which you have approached this crisis – prioritizing the safety of your staff while ensuring the continued efficacy of your

projects – demonstrate that you and your team are committed to improving the lives of the Ukrainian people.

Ambassador Villadsen, you faced these most recent challenges against the backdrop of the Russia-led conflict in eastern Ukraine and Russia's occupation of Crimea, which we continue to believe is a serious impediment to the progress and work of the OSCE, and peace and security in Europe. We applaud your work to provide communities with resources to address psychological trauma, specifically the trauma faced by veterans and their families.

You helped raise awareness of the impact of the conflict across a broad spectrum of Ukrainian society and assisted veterans to reintegrate into society, providing them and their families with appropriate support mechanisms. You are entitled to a great deal of credit from the OSCE Permanent Council for these efforts.

We welcome your focus on chemical safety and security, helping Ukrainian authorities develop a draft law that revised technical regulations on the classification and management of chemicals. Through that and other steps, including analysis of potential threats relating to manufacturing and mining waste in the Donbas, your mission is working to reduce the risks to local communities from chemicals and industrial waste, an ongoing issue that we are going to be dealing with in the future.

Ambassador Villadsen, your broad mandate has provided you with opportunities to support many key reforms, from developing training to ensure democratic civilian control of the Armed Forces, to countering illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, working with elections officials to upgrade e-voting systems and support election legislation reform, and strengthening the rule of law. The United States appreciates you and your team's engagement across the political, judicial, economic, and social spectra. We stand with the people of Ukraine as they build a prosperous, and European future.

We reiterate that the mandate of the Project Coordinator in Ukraine applies to the entirety of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, including Crimea and Russia-controlled territory in eastern Ukraine.

Thank you again, Ambassador Villadsen, for your service to the OSCE and for your service to the people of Ukraine.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

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