

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1001st MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

22 May 2014

Regarding the situation in Ukraine

Mr. Chairperson,

I draw your attention to the fact that under this sub-item on our agenda I will be talking about the situation in Ukraine.

This is not the first time that we hear baseless and unsubstantiated statements from our Ukrainian, United States and European Union colleagues that Russia is allegedly destabilizing the situation in Ukraine. These allegations harm, first and foremost, Ukraine itself. Hiding behind these claims, the authorities in Kyiv avoid discussions with Donetsk and Luhansk and continue to antagonize the population in the east with their military operations. In the end, they use this to justify their inability to get life back on track in the country or at least establish an economic base. The Ukrainian people are suffering as a result of this.

Just think about the argument which is frequently provided by our United States colleague: "There would be none of this without Russia". There would not be many other things without Russia either, and not only in Ukraine, with whom we – unlike the United States – share a direct border and with whom we are bound by deep historical and kinship ties.

We are told that Russia is allegedly undermining the fundamental pillars of international law through constant, unusual troop movements along its border with Ukraine. Let me ask a direct question: what specific provisions of international law are violated when we conduct exercises on our own territory? The Russian President gave the order for the troops that were participating in exercises in Rostov, Belgorod and Bryansk provinces to return to their permanent stations and continue training at nearby training ranges. This order is being carried out. By yesterday evening, 4 trains and 15 transport aircraft had left with troops. If you cannot see this from outer space, the White House or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kyiv, you can watch Russian television channels, where it can be seen in detail.

I am convinced that the active search for new accusations against Russia as the old ones lose their relevance is a sign of a short-sighted policy.

Our colleagues do not like how the events in Ukraine are being reported in the Russian media. This is, allegedly, a one-sided assault on the truth. It seems that Washington believes that there are only two points of view – the point of view of the United States and an incorrect point of view. However, we note that certain respected Western media are increasingly tending towards this so-called “incorrect point of view”. And they seem to face serious difficulties because of this.

As for the situation of journalists in Ukraine, it is indeed complicated. We note a range of flagrant violations of commitments regarding freedom of the media. There are no special measures to ensure the freedom of Russian journalists, including protection against arbitrary deportation. Freedom of movement across the State border is restricted, which means that media representatives cannot fulfil the tasks set by their editorial offices. Agreements on the broadcasting of radio and television programmes are being violated. The ruling by a Kyiv court to “suspend broadcasting” by leading Russian channels has been contested and will be examined at a higher level, but these channels are still not being broadcast, despite an active legal defence.

Journalists in Ukraine are carrying out dangerous work, virtually under conditions of armed conflict. This requires active co-operation between States and journalist communities. We welcome the recent signing of a memorandum between Russian and Ukrainian journalist associations under the auspices of the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

In the meantime, Ukrainian security forces have detained the LifeNews journalists, Oleg Sidyakin and Marat Saichenko, under a spurious pretext. The authorities in Kyiv are refusing to allow representatives of the OSCE mission access to them. I have a specific question for the Ukrainian representative. Why is the mission not being allowed access to the two LifeNews journalists and when will they be released? An independent British journalist Graham Phillips, who is working for Russia Today, was detained. Fortunately, he was released yesterday evening. We call on the senior officials of the OSCE and the Representative on Freedom of the Media to use their authority to secure the detained journalists’ immediate release.

Russian journalists from the All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company and Russia Today were not even allowed to report on the elections, to which the Ukrainian authorities attach such great significance. There are many such cases. How will this help to ensure objective coverage of the elections? Or, perhaps, the idea is to cover up those problems which, judging by the latest interim report of the monitoring mission by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, were identified during the preparations for the elections?

Candidates continue to drop out of the presidential race because of violations of their rights. There are many security issues. As soon as the elections were announced, Right Sector militants and Maidan units stated that they intended to control the voting and the work of the Central Election Commission closely. Let us see whether the law enforcement agencies will be able to prevent this.

Of course, elections of a Head of State as such are a step in the right direction. It is all the more important to ensure that these elections are truly nationwide and free. The way to

achieve this is through broad compromise within Ukrainian society regarding the constitutional foundations of the State.

The elections cannot take place normally if the violence continues. We urge the authorities in Kyiv to put a stop to this immediately. Unfortunately, contrary to the commitment to refrain from any violence, intimidation or provocations, Kyiv has not only failed to call off its punitive operation against its own people but is also consistently stepping it up, subjecting cities in the east of the country to regular shelling at night, at times using heavy artillery. This morning the National Guard began an offensive against the city of Lisychansk in the north of Luhansk province. For some reason they have blown up the bridge across the Seversky Donets River.

Kyiv has also forgotten about its commitment to immediately disarm illegal armed formations, especially Right Sector militants and other ultra-radicals as well as various regional military structures like “Dnieper” and the National Guard, which is dubious from the point of view of its legal standing.

The amnesty is not working. Instead of freeing political prisoners, the Kyiv authorities are branding anyone who disagrees with them a “terrorist” and deliberately increasing the number of arrests.

Mr. Chairperson,

We share the points of view that we heard at the last meeting and previous ones, namely that pumping up the rhetoric is not conducive to constructive dialogue or to a search for practical solutions. We believe that it would be wise to stick to this logic during further discussions on the situation in Ukraine.

We commend the efforts of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, who proposed the road map that was finally published yesterday. We call on our Ukrainian colleagues and the other parties to the Geneva agreements to follow this plan closely.

We note the start of work in Ukraine of the round tables intended to ensure national reconciliation and fair and stable constitutional order in the country. It is a matter of fundamental importance not to attempt to separate the dialogue process from the preparations for constitutional reform, which is still not sufficiently transparent. If the idea is to conduct real reform in a closed regime and then foist it on the regions, this will probably not increase the south-east’s confidence in the Kyiv authorities.

We trust that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission and the Co-Moderator from the OSCE, Wolfgang Ischinger, will be able to provide the necessary assistance in organizing the round tables, including through contacts with those who are in control of the situation at the local level.

The Memorandum of Understanding and Peace adopted by the Verkhovna Rada is the first public and understandable, albeit belated, step towards implementing the Geneva agreements and the road map.

Overall we take a positive view of the condemnation of the use of weapons and violence, which has already led to massive loss of life, and the intention to ensure immediate

constitutional reform, which envisages a decentralization of power. The intention to provide the regional powers with financial resources through a fair distribution of budgetary funds, the desire to fight corruption at all levels of the State authorities and the appeal to prevent interreligious and inter-ethnic conflicts in the country deserve support.

At the same time, it is well known that during the debate on the draft Memorandum important questions that would guarantee mutual understanding and peace in Ukraine were removed from the draft. Specifically, the text of the Memorandum text has no provision on the non-aligned status of the country, and the idea of some kind of guarantee of the status of the Russian language by the Verkhovna Rada is vaguely formulated. Kyiv's plans for de-escalating the conflict, in particular, the deadline for ending the military operation in eastern Ukraine, also require clarification.

It is regrettable that the representatives of the Ukrainian regions who have earned the trust of the inhabitants did not participate in the discussion of the Memorandum. It is also noteworthy that the Memorandum did not receive the consensus support of deputies in the Verkhovna Rada either.

In conclusion, I should like to draw attention to the fact that an open and just investigation of the tragedy in Odessa, which is already being referred to as a crime against humanity, would make an important contribution to national reconciliation in Ukraine. Many facts are emerging now. We cannot allow the investigation to be sabotaged. It is important to investigate all the circumstances of the tragedy thoroughly and identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice. We believe that the OSCE and its human rights institutions have the necessary capabilities to monitor this process.

Thank you for your attention.

I should like to respond to the topic of the Crimean Tatars, which was touched upon by our colleagues.

Russia attaches great importance to the topic of the Crimean Tatars. The presidential decree on the rehabilitation of the Crimean Tatars was signed on 21 April this year. It will lay the foundations for systematic measures connected with cultural and political rehabilitation, and with establishing a normal life for the people and creating conditions for the continued development of the Crimean Tatars. This has not been done during all the years that Crimea was part of Ukraine. All the work on economic rehabilitation will take place on the basis of the Federal Targeted Programme for the Development of Crimea to be adopted by the Russian Government. The Crimean Parliament adopted a decision on the 20 per cent participation of Crimean Tatars in public authorities.

On 16 May, President Putin met with Crimean Tatar representatives. The inadmissibility of using the Crimean Tatar people as a bargaining chip in inter-State disputes was underscored at that meeting. President Putin stressed that in Russia there is the very good example of the development of Tatarstan, which "is the leader in many sectors compared to other constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Therefore, the Crimean Tatars have every chance of becoming such leaders not only in Crimea but also in Russia." I might add that contrary to what has been said by the representative of the European Union, appropriate commemorative events were held in Crimea and Simferopol, in particular, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the deportation, in a slightly changed format, taking into

consideration the military actions by the Kyiv regime near Crimea. Some 10,000 people participated in these events. If you do not know the facts, it is better not to say anything. This also applies to the report by Ivan Šimonović. The experts were not familiar with the real situation on the peninsula.

We have posted a video of the meeting between the Russian President and Crimean Tatar representatives on our website. We invite you to watch it. You will then have a much better understanding of the real state of affairs there.

Thank you for your attention.