



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Statement on Events in Ukraine**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
December 30, 2013

I would like to start by once again thanking and recognizing the Ukrainian Chairmanship-in-Office, which holds its last Permanent Council meeting today. As many have recognized, the team here in Vienna, led by Ambassador Prokopchuk, along with colleagues in Kyiv on the task force and Foreign Minister Kozhara, have much to be proud of over the last year. You have been good colleagues and good stewards of our collective endeavors.

The Ukrainian Chairmanship rightly spearheaded an effort to adopt a new decision on protection of journalists at the recent Ministerial Council meeting in Kyiv. We have not yet succeeded in adopting the decision, but it is clear that the safety of journalists remains an urgent area of concern, particularly in Ukraine in recent weeks.

The United States, like many other countries, was deeply dismayed to learn of the violent beating of Ukrainian activist and journalist Tatiana Chornovol in the early morning of December 25. A few hours earlier, Chornovol, who has reported critically on alleged government misuse of state resources, had posted on her blog photos of a residence alleged to belong to a member of the Yanukovich government. The photographs of Chornovol's bloodied and battered face after she was left in a ditch by her assailants are a haunting reminder of the work still before us to prevent future abuses in the OSCE space.

Chornovol's beating appears to be part of an emerging pattern of retribution against those who have organized, participated in, or reported sympathetically on the Euromaidan protests in exercising their fundamental freedoms of expression and assembly. One journalist tweeted poignantly on Christmas Day: "The scary thing [about] an assault on Chornovol [is] that every journalist working in Ukraine now could easily imagine himself in her place, me included."

Journalists, including citizen journalists and bloggers, play a crucial role in a free and prosperous society. They call attention to the mistakes of those in power and help the public hold them accountable. They expose instances of corruption that rob economies of their vitality and corrode political systems. Journalists also document the lives of our fellow citizens and fellow human beings, how they work, love, celebrate, protest, worship and so on—they show us the challenges they face, their successes and failures, and help us to better understand the other individuals with whom we must work to create just and free societies.

The government of Ukraine, including President Yanukovich and all ministers, should uphold its OSCE commitments and publically commit to zero tolerance of retribution against activists and journalists, and back that commitment up with action, including investigation and prosecution of these kinds of deplorable crimes.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.