



United States Mission to the OSCE

First Reply to Russia on Russia's Ongoing Violations in Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 8, 2015

I just wanted to respond to a few points made by our distinguished Russian colleague.

Let me begin by saying that I share the sense that there is reason for cautious optimism, and I appreciate the Russian colleague's focus on the need to finish work that has only just begun and to build confidence in the ceasefire. I did, however, want to respond to a couple of other points he made.

One, on his point about monitoring being equal on both sides of the line, it wasn't entirely clear to me what our distinguished Russian colleague was aiming at here, but certainly I think there were many voices of agreement that the SMM must have full access to all areas in Ukraine – it should have full access to all of Ukraine, including Crimea, but in order for monitoring to be evenly done in all of Ukraine there needs to be a resolution of the long-standing problem of restrictions of access, particularly in Russian-led separatist controlled areas.

The second was just to respond to particular aspects of SMM reporting. I think our distinguished Russian colleague relayed some parts of recent reports that he has read. Others of us have cited other facts from recent reports. I think this just underscores the need to read the reports carefully and fully, and obviously we know the SMM can only report on things it observes, which again goes to the access issue.

Our distinguished Russian colleague made the point that some colleagues had made assertions based on SMM reporting, and he said that Russia rejected the idea that it was "still delivering" military equipment in Ukraine. I'm glad to hear the distinguished Russian ambassador say that the Russian Federation is not "still delivering" military equipment – that's good news. And now the trend should be to remove military equipment that has been delivered over many months. It is factually untrue to say that the SMM has never seen evidence of this. For example, even though the access to the border has been limited, there has been a report several months ago where the SMM did see tank tracks at the border coming from the Russian Federation into Ukraine.

So, if the distinguished Russian colleague was accurate in saying that shipments of military equipment have ceased now, we would urge that the Russian Federation take all steps to remove all military equipment, consistent with its commitments under Minsk.

My final point is just about what the opportunity is now. The distinguished Russian colleague said that Kyiv had already missed the opportunity for elections, and I just think it's important to remind colleagues that actually Ukraine had passed legislation almost a year ago to provide for special local elections in the special status area on December 7, 2014. That was derailed

by Russia's collusion with its proxies in these areas to have fake, clown elections in November of last year, which derailed that process. So it's actually Russia that has missed the opportunity, and missed repeated opportunities.

So, what is the opportunity now: yes, there's an opportunity to redouble efforts in the political working group, and we see that opportunity as well and we urge the participants in that working group to work in earnest to make progress. But it's important to recognize that the work in the political working group is not enough. That alone won't solve the situation. Russia still must follow through on its Minsk commitments, and remove all weapons and fighters from Ukrainian territory. Without removing the armed men, there is no way to have a free and fair election for the people who live in these areas.

So the ball remains in Russia's court, in terms of following through on these material steps on the ground, in order to enable political progress.

Thank you, Madam Chair.