



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 Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Last week, we expressed concern over the escalating violence the Special Monitoring Mission observed in the areas around Shyrokyne and Donetsk. Since then, pro-Russian separatist attacks and violence have escalated, the security situation has deteriorated further, and the SMM has suspended patrols in several areas around Donetsk City.

As we have said before, separatist forces effectively function as an extension of Russian military power.

SMM reports clearly demonstrate that Russia-backed separatists continue to launch attacks beyond the ceasefire line and use heavy artillery that should have been withdrawn in accordance with the February 12 Minsk Package of Measures. On May 2, one of the SMM's armored vehicles was hit by small arms fire on its way to Shyrokyne. The same day, in Pisky, mortar shells impacted 100 meters from the SMM's location. On another occasion, SMM monitors had to take cover in an underground shelter due to shelling. These incidents illustrate the threat to the safety of SMM personnel, and demonstrate the continued failure of Russia and the Russia-backed separatists to implement the Minsk agreements.

We applaud the SMM's efforts to monitor hotspots, broker ceasefires, propose disengagement plans, and foster dialogue while working under extremely challenging circumstances. We appreciate Deputy Chief Monitor Hug's May 5 briefing to participating States on the measures the SMM is taking to protect monitors and mitigate risks. The safety of the monitors must remain paramount.

During his briefing, Deputy Chief Monitor Hug stated that, despite the terms of the Minsk Memorandum and Protocol, the SMM still has no direct access to monitor the border areas within the separatist-controlled territory in Luhansk. SMM reports show that Russia-backed separatists have consistently failed to provide the SMM with the security guarantees it needs to fully access separatist-controlled territory. At every occasion, SMM officials have voiced their readiness to verify the implementation of the Minsk agreements, yet Russia-backed separatists continue to keep the monitors away from the areas they most need to access.

As it obstructs Ukraine's full control of the entire international border and the SMM's ability to monitor this area, Russia has been moving military equipment and personnel across Ukraine's border at will and without inspection.

It is dismaying to hear Russia thank the SMM for its work here in the Permanent Council or call for the implementation of the Minsk agreements, while thwarting the monitors' efforts on the ground in Ukraine and flouting its Minsk commitments.

Russia's blatant disregard for the Minsk agreements and OSCE principles and commitments does not stop there. Russians and the separatists are working together, training together, and operating with the same command and control systems. Combined Russian-separatist forces maintain a sizeable number of artillery pieces and multiple rocket launchers within areas prohibited under Minsk. Russia is building up its forces along its border with Ukraine. Russia also continues to send convoys into Ukraine in contravention of international law and without full and proper inspection by Ukraine or any international organization that might reveal the true contents of what Russia says is humanitarian aid. Russia and the separatists it backs have yet to give ODIHR the security guarantees it needs to carry out work critical to the preparations for local elections in the special status zone. These actions remind us that the Minsk agreements remain unimplemented. Even more worrisome is that these carefully-forged peace initiatives are undermined by Russia and the Russia-backed separatists, that is to say, by several of Minsk's own signatories.

We welcome the news of the May 6 meetings in Minsk of the Trilateral Contact Group and the four working groups. We urge the working groups to begin meaningful efforts to implement the steps called for in the Minsk agreements. There must be more than talk: there must be action on the ground.

The Minsk agreements remain the best opportunity to achieve peace in eastern Ukraine, but they will not succeed if the signatories do not honor their commitments. We once again call on Russia, and the separatists it backs and controls, to immediately stop their attacks, enforce the ceasefire, withdraw heavy weapons in a verifiable manner, halt the flow of fighters and equipment from Russia into Ukraine, and end the training of separatists.

We call on Russia to cease its efforts to destabilize Ukraine and to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We demand that Russia end its occupation of Crimea, which remains an integral part of Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.