



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 5, 2015

Thank you, Ambassador Apakan for your timely and informative presentation. I will have more to say about the current situation in Ukraine later in this meeting, but for now I want to say a few words about your leadership of the SMM and the good work you and your monitors are doing every day.

OSCE participating States have benefited greatly from your efforts to keep us well informed about the situation in Ukraine, and also about the operational challenges you face in and around the conflict zone in eastern Ukraine. Your joint appearances with Ambassador Tagliavini via video link during the past two weeks, together with your presentation today, serve as a model for providing timely and useful information to the Permanent Council.

Ambassador Apakan, the SMM has performed admirably under extremely trying circumstances, especially during the heavy fighting of the past few weeks. In the face of a massive increase of Russia-backed separatists' attacks and violence, your team has managed to provide much needed information about the situation on the ground while staying out of harm's way.

Ambassador Apakan, we congratulate you on continuing to increase the number of monitors deployed by the SMM – reaching 413 as of the beginning of this week, including the 20 that are finishing up their training in Kyiv. The United States remains committed to supporting the SMM and ensuring that it has the personnel and resources to get its job done. That is why on February 1 we transferred an additional \$1 million (or approx. Euro 900,000) to the SMM, bringing our total extra-budgetary contribution to \$6 million. We also have 44 monitors currently on the ground in Ukraine, and plan to reach a total of 50 monitors by the end of February. The United States is confident that the SMM has the appropriate procedures in place to mitigate the risks to monitors working in eastern Ukraine, and that the SMM leadership will continue to apply sound judgment in determining when certain areas may be too dangerous for monitors to operate there.

Ambassador Apakan, we greatly appreciate the SMM's efforts to provide practical assistance to the innocent people caught up in the separatist assaults, notably the SMM's negotiation of a ceasefire to allow for the evacuation of civilians from Debaltseve. We welcome the SMM's efforts to pursue local ceasefires for humanitarian purposes and urge all sides to cooperate

with the SMM in this effort. Such efforts underscore the reality that the SMM is operating in a much more dangerous and volatile environment than we had envisioned when we first adopted the Mission's mandate in March 2014. As the situation on the ground evolves in the coming weeks, we will continue to look to the SMM to be our eyes and ears in Ukraine, and to provide participating States with the information they need to understand more fully the situation where fighting continues.

If I may, I'd like to respond to a couple of issues that you raised in your report.

First, to offer strong support for your assessment that securing the international border is a fundamental pre-condition for arriving at a political diplomatic solution. I'd be interested in your assessment of what further changes need to happen on the ground in order for the SMM to be able to implement the border monitoring plan that it has created.

Second, while we know about the attacks on the OSCE's UAVs, I appreciate your raising the issue today. If you had any further comments on how UAVs can further contribute going forward and what the obstacles are that we face there, I'd appreciate some more detail there.

Third, I appreciate your raising the issue of detainees. Obviously, this is something that was agreed at Minsk, that they should be released. We know that there are detainees being held illegally in Russia, as well as by separatists on the territory of Ukraine, and we appreciate all efforts of the SMM to use its good offices to facilitate the return of illegally detained people. Particularly, as you mentioned, the civilians who remain illegally detained in the separatist-controlled areas.

And finally, to offer support for the European Union's reminder that there remains an urgent need for monitoring in Crimea, and that whatever efforts the SMM can make to ensure that the international community has a full view of what is happening in Crimea, will be much appreciated.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.