



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

### **Reply to the Russian Federation on 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  
July 16, 2015

Thank you for letting me respond to the distinguished Russian colleague. Colleagues, what we heard from our Russian colleague today was again a long list of complaints which are not any more true despite the passion with which they were delivered. I think it's worth reviewing a few of them.

First, with respect to the constitutional amendments: I think – taking a step back here – there was an agreement made that the conflict in eastern Ukraine should be settled by a political process. And I would note that on the Ukrainian side – President Poroshenko – had put forward his intention to solve the conflict through a political process long before the Russian/separatists' crimes at Illovaïsk, long before the Russian/separatist occupation of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, long before the Russian/separatist attack at Debaltseve.

What we heard today from our Russian colleague was again a fairly clear indication of the Russian Federation's desire to dictate and assert a violent veto over the constitution of a sovereign state.

What we've actually seen is that despite Russia's failure from day one, day one from the ceasefire agreed last September, and day one from when the ceasefire was agreed in February which Russia violated in the first hours. Despite Russian violations, we've seen Ukraine press forward with laying the groundwork for the political process, even though the ceasefire hasn't been obtained. Despite the fact that the sequencing for this has not gone according to plan, Ukraine has been preparing for political process.

President Poroshenko put forward constitutional amendments which include the specific reference to special status for certain areas of Luhansk and Donetsk, and also create the capacity to elaborate further, in Ukrainian law, certain aspects of that special status at the time that those areas of Donetsk and Luhansk have legitimate political representatives.

Now, if the Russian Federation hadn't been so instrumental in obstructing the ground work to actually have the special local elections that have been agreed to in those areas, it's possible that those areas could have political representatives right now. But unfortunately, the Russian Federation and its proxies have taken every step to block legitimate, free and fair local elections to elect political representatives to be able to engage in a political process.

Why does Russia do that? That's for Russia to say. But maybe because Russia is afraid that the people who would emerge from a free and fair political process would not be stooges and pawns of the Russian Federation.

But we need to stand back and look at what Ukraine has done. The amendments have not been fully agreed yet, they were endorsed by Parliament today but they will need a second reading. But the amendments that have been put forward lay the groundwork for the kind of political process that was agreed to at Minsk.

I'd also like to respond to our Russian colleague's comments about the so-called "blockade." I've said this before, and I think it bears repeating: people need to understand that because the Russian Federation controls the international border, and because the sovereign government of Ukraine is not permitted to control the international border, and because the Russian Federation has blocked the international monitoring of the international border that it has agreed to, that international border cannot be trusted. We know that contraband and weapons and fighters have come across that international border which is not under observation or control. And until Russia agrees to have that international border monitored and under the proper control on the Ukrainian side of the Ukrainian government, the Ukrainian government has to exercise due responsibility, and protect its citizens from the filth and the contraband that Russia is pouring into eastern Ukraine.

So if Russia really cares about lifting that blockade, the steps they would take are clear: they would support the expansion of the SMM observer mission on the Russian side of the border, and they would force the separatists to allow the SMM access to the Ukrainian side of the border.

Finally, I'd like to respond to our Russian colleague's complaint that there seems to be a narrative that Russia is responsible for all of Ukraine's woes. It is true that years of Russian subjugation and coercion and the export of Russian-style corruption rotted Ukraine. It is also true that the Ukrainian people have democratically chosen to reject that style of living, have democratically chosen to live in a manner which they associate with institutional Europe, with institutions and law enforcement that can be trusted, with the rule of law and the protection of human rights, with transparency and accountability, without corruption.

It is also true that Russia is aggressively interfering with the efforts of Ukrainians to seek that future, by perpetrating a conflict on Ukrainian territory. But Ukraine is pressing on. The Ukrainian people are not deterred – they want that European future. If you travel there you hear them speak to the depth of their commitment to pursuing that European future.

So I think that what we heard again from our Russian colleague today was telling: it was a projection. A projection of fear, that Ukraine will succeed in building a European future, that will make the rot and corruption in Russia ever more evident – not only to people outside of Russia, but to people within Russia.

And so it's worth repeating again what we said at the very outset of Russia's aggression, which is that nothing Russia does wrong beyond its borders will fix any of the problems that it has at home.

Thank you, Mr.Chair.