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

# **Right of Reply to Russia - “Seventh Anniversary of the Reunification of Crimea with Russia”**

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires Courtney Austrian  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
March 18, 2021

As is nearly always the case, Russia again finds itself at odds with most of the Permanent Council. While Moscow has chosen March 16 as the date to “celebrate” its coerced and illegitimate “referendum” in Crimea, the rest of the participating States—and the international community—vividly recall Russia seized the peninsula by force in late February 2014. In fact, during the March 4, PC we spoke on this very topic.

On February 27, 2014 Russia’s “little green men” first appeared in Crimea as the Kremlin positioned its forces for a hostile takeover. It then attempted to legitimize its takeover *via* a sham referendum that was immediately and broadly condemned by the international community.

The facts are evident. But Russia expects us to accept its false, distorted narrative of events. We will not.

Crimea is Ukraine. We call on Russia to cease its repression and abuse of Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians, and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Crimea, release all Ukrainian political prisoners, and immediately end its occupation of the peninsula.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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