



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 Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Gregory Macris
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 8, 2018

Last week, members of this Council pressed Russia for answers regarding the Special Monitoring Mission's (SMM) long-range UAV that was downed on October 27 over Russia-controlled territory in eastern Ukraine. We, along with the rest of this Council, have yet to hear Russia's explanation of its role in an incident that occurred in territory it controls.

The October 27 downing of the UAV deprives the SMM of one of its most useful assets. The United States reaffirms its support for the SMM as the world's eyes and ears in Ukraine. We denounce all attempts to restrict the Mission in its duties and remind other participating States that the SMM's mandate calls for safe and secure access throughout the entirety of Ukraine, to include its internationally recognized border with Russia.

The United States joins with others in condemning the so-called "Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics" plan to hold illegitimate "elections" on November 11. These illegal elections, orchestrated by Russia, run counter to the Minsk agreements, obstruct efforts to end the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine, and have no basis in Ukrainian law. The Minsk agreements state that the OSCE is to supervise elections, which are to be held in accordance with OSCE standards. This planned November 11 balloting will satisfy none of these conditions.

Mr. Chair, as temperatures fall and winter approaches, we call attention to the fact that Russia's manufactured conflict in Ukraine has developed into a humanitarian crisis the size of which the continent has not seen in a generation. Estimates are that 3.4 million Ukrainian citizens require humanitarian assistance or protection and over 1.5 million are internally displaced. This conflict wreaks death and destruction on civilians, regardless of what side of the contact line they are on, the religion they profess, the language they speak, or the political views they hold. We encourage all parties to allow affected civilians to have unfettered access to humanitarian aid, government services, and to guard against further civilian losses and damage to critical infrastructure.

The United States greatly appreciates the efforts of France and Germany in the Normandy Format to push for implementation of the Minsk agreements. Unfortunately, Russia continues to impede the peace process and is stalling talks between Special Representative Volker and Russian Presidential Advisor Vladislav Surkov. We call on Russia to engage in serious conversations about how to end the conflict, improve security and humanitarian conditions for the local population, and implement Minsk.

Beyond eastern Ukraine, Russia contravenes OSCE principles and commitments with its occupation of the Crimean Peninsula and its aggressive actions in the Sea of Azov, where it harasses and obstructs international shipping bound for Ukraine's ports. These actions demonstrate Moscow's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Mr. Chairperson, the situation in Crimea is deplorable. Raids, detentions, and arrests, often targeting Crimean Tatars, occur on a regular basis. On November 6, a prosecutor accompanied by a contingent of men wearing masks reportedly raided the Simferopol office of Crimean Tatar human rights lawyer Emil Kurbedinov and warned him not to violate "extremism and terrorism" legislation. Approximately two dozen Crimean Tatars have already been prosecuted and imprisoned on these pretexts of supposed "extremism" or "terrorism."

Russia enforces its occupation of Crimea with a heavy security and military presence on the peninsula, which is leading to increased tensions and provocations in the Black Sea.

The United States fully supports Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We do not, nor will we ever, recognize Russia's purported annexation of Crimea. We join our European and other partners in affirming that our Minsk-related sanctions against Russia will remain in place until Russia fully implements its Minsk commitments. The separate, Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.