



United States Mission to the OSCE

Crimea is Ukraine: Rejecting the Russian Federation's Conduct of a Sham Election in Crimea

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry R. Kamian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Four years ago, as local residents stared down the barrels of Russian guns, Moscow staged an illegitimate referendum in Crimea. During the entire operation, Russia engaged in a campaign of lies designed to distort and distract from its seizure and purported annexation of Ukrainian territory, using this and other fora to spread its falsehoods.

Since its invasion and occupation of Crimea, Russia has held several rounds of sham elections in Crimea, in an attempt to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and violate Ukraine's territorial integrity. The Russian occupation authorities staging these illegitimate elections deliberately engage in frequent and severe abuses, specifically targeting the Crimean Tatar community and others opposed to Russia's occupation. The United States strongly condemns Russia's efforts to coerce the Ukrainian citizens in Crimea into voting in these illegitimate elections. The United States did not recognize the legitimacy or the outcome of the March 2014 referendum, and we will not recognize the elections Russia will stage in Crimea on March 18. In Russia-occupied Crimea, by definition, elections conducted by the occupation authorities or under Russian law have no legitimacy. Simply put Mr. Chair, Crimea is Ukraine.

Russia's effort to stage another illegitimate election in Crimea on March 18 is antithetical to Helsinki principles. It is only an attempt to give its purported annexation of Crimea a semblance of legitimacy. It is yet another sign of aggression against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Russia's neighbors. Mr. Chair, the United States will never accept Russia's occupation and purported annexation of Crimea. We support the Minsk agreements as the best way to end the conflict in eastern Ukraine, while respecting Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. Mr. Chair, in conclusion, the solution is clear. Russia must return control of the Crimean peninsula to Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.