



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine, Ambassador Henrik Villadsen

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 23, 2022

Ambassador Villadsen, dear Henrik, welcome back to the Permanent Council, and thank you for your report. I'm sorry you had to listen to this previous long screed of abject disinformation that we just heard from the Russian representative. As I have said before, they are incredible at replicating what George Orwell once called the habit of impudently claiming that black is white in contradiction of the plain facts. I have never seen anyone quite so good at it, ever. They certainly excel at some things, that is for sure. In any case, I'm sorry you had to go through that.

It's true that for over two decades the Project Coordinator in Ukraine has done essential and extraordinary work in all three OSCE dimensions on behalf of the people of Ukraine. We commend your longstanding efforts in support of the government of Ukraine on rule of law, human rights, democratization, and good governance, all of which are indispensable to Ukraine's implementation of its OSCE commitments and to its future as a vibrant democracy. Your efforts have made Ukraine stronger and more resilient. And that's probably why they were so vehemently objected to in the previous presentation. Sad fact is, Russian speakers in Ukraine have their rights a whole lot better protected than in the north, in Russia.

Since February 24 the PCU has, under extraordinarily difficult circumstances, assisted the people and government of Ukraine in addressing the consequences of Russia's brutal and unprovoked war – a mission that today ranks among the most vital, well let's be honest, *the* most vital tasks of this organization. We note that your international and national staff have undertaken this mission at their own personal risk, some of whom were slandered just now, with some re-entering Ukraine during a time of great peril to carry on their work on behalf of this organization, while others never left at all. Their loyalty and sense of duty is inspiring to us all, and I extend my deepest appreciation to them and to you.

Nowhere is the value of the PCU's contributions clearer than in the efforts of the Humanitarian Project in Ukraine. Recognizing that the OSCE is, of course, not a humanitarian organization, we commend you for your adaptability and leadership in guiding the PCU and collaborating with local and international partners to help meet the urgent and extraordinary humanitarian needs of displaced persons and refugees, the vast majority of whom are women and children. This has clearly been the most pressing need of Ukraine's wartime population, and for our organization's

own relevance and integrity it was vital that we stepped up and I thank you for leading those efforts. We also know that your efforts to combat human trafficking have made a positive difference in the lives of those fleeing danger and seeking safety and security.

We are also grateful for your work to prevent and respond to all forms of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. There is much more work to do, but we are grateful to your mission for engaging on this issue.

We strongly agree that in this and other areas the PCU has been well-placed to provide further programmatic support to mitigate the widening damage and destruction caused by the war, such as by assessing chemical and radiological risks stemming from Russia's reckless military actions against Ukraine's industrial and civil nuclear facilities, as well as related environmental and agricultural degradation; promoting journalist safety; supporting the enormous task of humanitarian demining, which you mentioned; cyber security; extending psychological and social support to those in need; and combating the illicit trafficking of weapons, ammunition, and explosives.

The United States therefore believes there is a clear and compelling need for continued OSCE programmatic support to Ukraine to address urgent challenges, among them support for rule of law and accountability, assistance to conflict-affected populations, and mitigation of the disastrous effects of Russia's full-scale invasion on the environment. The OSCE must prioritize effective assistance to Ukraine's government and people as they persevere in the face of Russia's brutal war of aggression. That is why we deeply regret that Russia has blocked the PCU's mandate renewal. Of course, it is hardly surprising that Russia, which launched this brutal war in blatant violation of international law and in contravention of OSCE principles, would now stand in the way of this organization's much-needed assistance to the at-risk civilian population of Ukraine. In fact, we saw this before. We saw this with the ending of the Border Observation Mission, as has been mentioned, with the closure of the Special Monitoring Mission. Again, we are not surprised that we have reached this point, but we *will* overcome this hurdle.

Ambassador Villadsen, dear Henrik,

In fulfilling your mandate and supporting the implementation of OSCE commitments, you and your team have performed a critical, heroic function on behalf of this organization that is made even more significant by the massive humanitarian and human tragedy that is unfolding now in Ukraine as a result of Russia's aggression. This brutal war only underscores how important OSCE commitments and shared values are to the preservation of peace, security, and prosperity in the OSCE area. You and your team have our deepest and enduring thanks and appreciation for your service and leadership.

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