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## United States Mission to the OSCE

# Ongoing Violations of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation and the Situation in Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 29, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, we are deeply concerned by the hostage taking by separatist forces of fifteen monitors of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission. We are relieved that eleven of the fifteen hostages have been released; four, however, remain captive. This is unacceptable and all OSCE participating States must use their influence to secure the release of the monitors and to guarantee the security of the SMM. We call for the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages, the end of all harassment of SMM staff, and full respect for the SMM to carry out its mandate, unimpeded and across all of the territory of Ukraine. The United States fully supports the work of the SMM to assist the government and people of Ukraine in securing and advancing their democratic future.

We are pleased by this morning's news that the Verkhovna Rada ratified the memorandum of understanding on deployment of the Special Monitoring Mission, which will allow for the continued strengthening of the SMM.

We are also alarmed by reports of an influx of weapons and armed groups crossing the Russian border, including Chechen fighters, to stir up unrest. We again urge the separatists to lay down their weapons and all those with influence and ability to take steps to stem the flow of weapons and fighters across the Russia-Ukraine border.

As we've already noted, Sunday's elections demonstrated the ability of Ukraine to triumph over adversity and outside efforts to destabilize the country, to vote in large numbers in credible elections for unity, and to choose a democratic and prosperous future. Ukraine's electoral officials successfully sought to enfranchise voters and provided every possible opportunity for voting despite the chaos and violence perpetrated by separatist militants. Turnout was historically high across the country. Even in those conflict-affected areas where polling was able to take place, nearly 200,000 Ukrainians turned out to vote, despite the danger to themselves. The

Ukrainian government and electoral officials also countered cyber-attacks aimed at shutting down the Central Election Commission, enabling tabulation and reporting of results to be completed in a timely fashion.

We've heard some criticisms today of Ukrainian elections, and I would just note that the OSCE observers reported that 98% of the polling stations that were assessed, were positively assessed. As a point of comparison, we note that in the 2012 presidential election in Russia, one-third of polling stations were negatively assessed, and there were reports of massive abuse of administrative resources and coercion.

As separatists created hurdles and roadblocks, the Government of Ukraine has sought to overcome these hurdles, to truly listen to its citizens across the country, and find ways to provide the prosperous and democratic future all Ukrainians deserve. The government of Ukraine has worked tirelessly to implement its commitments and to stabilize the security situation, including those laid out on April 17 in Geneva. We heard again today the false allegation that the Ukrainian government did not take steps immediately to implement Geneva. As we've said many times before, they took a number of steps, including immediately beginning the clearing and cleaning of barricades and the protest sites in the streets around the Maidan in Kyiv.

The United States wishes to reiterate its deepest concern about the media freedom and safety of journalists in Crimea and Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. We note the Representative on Freedom of the Media's May 23 report and join her in condemning "on-going attacks on journalists [that] are nothing short of gross and severe violations of fundamental human rights." Most of these attacks – which include acts of intimidation, assault, kidnapping and torture – are part of a concerted effort by separatist militants and self-declared authorities in Crimea and areas of Donetsk and Luhansk to clamp down on freedom of expression.

For example, on May 11, Crimean film director and pro-Maidan activist Oleg Sentsov was reportedly arrested and held incommunicado by Russian Security Services in Simferopol, and charged with terrorism. We join the Russian and Ukrainian filmmakers' unions in calling for his immediate release and dismissal of these charges. We deplore the recent killings of Italian photojournalist Andrea Rocchelli and his Russian assistant Andrei Mironov, who had been arrested this February for exercising peacefully his rights in his native Russia, and send our deepest condolences to their families and colleagues. We join Representative Mijatovic in calling for a thorough investigation by Ukrainian authorities of the circumstances leading to these tragic deaths.

Mr. Chairman, Ukraine's elections present a new opportunity to resolve the current crisis. President-elect Poroshenko has made clear his intention to engage all citizens and regions of Ukraine, as well as Ukraine's neighbors, in ending the crisis, restoring governance, and strengthening national unity. The United States welcomes President-elect Poroshenko and the Ukrainian government's commitment to quickly

implement the reforms necessary for Ukraine to bring the country together and to develop a sustainable economy, an attractive investment climate, and a transparent and accountable government that is responsive to the concerns and aspirations of all Ukrainians.

Sunday's elections provide a new opportunity to see relations begin to normalize between Russia and Ukraine. We take note of public pronouncements by Russia's government to respect the expressed will of the Ukrainian people. We expect Russia to follow through in word and deed and to engage the Poroshenko government, take shared steps to de-escalate the situation, and use its influence over the separatists to stop violence.

This morning's news that a Ukrainian army helicopter carrying 14 persons was shot down, reportedly by anti-aircraft weaponry – that is to say, weaponry that is not commonly available – underscores our concerns. We call on Russia to publically condemn separatist violence, follow through on words with actions, and exercise its influence to play a constructive rather than a destructive role.

We take note of the recent moves by Russia to pull some of its military forces back from the Ukrainian border. This is a positive step. And yet many units and much military equipment remain and the pace of their removal should be accelerated. Russia should take additional steps to provide transparency about its moves, using OSCE mechanisms as appropriate.

Russia needs to end its illegal occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea. We firmly support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and condemn and reject Russia's occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea.

Finally before closing, Mr. Chair, I would like to thank our Russian colleague for the announcement by the Russian Federation of a substantial contribution to the SMM. We welcome the announcement that Russia will be the twentieth participating State to contribute to this important shared endeavor.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.