



United States Mission to the OSCE

Replies to the Russian Federation on the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian Border Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I, too, was disappointed with the statement from the Russian delegation today. Colleagues, I think it's important -- I'd just like to remind of one quote from our Russian colleague today -- that some of us around the table point to "an external boogie man who can be blamed for Ukraine's inability to solve its own internal conflict."

That is rubbish.

We all know that Russia is involved in this conflict, and has been for two and a half years. It's not an external boogie man. It's the neighboring state, which is actively undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its neighbor, in violation of its OSCE commitments and international law.

And the fact that Russia still tries to trot out these tired old lines is embarrassing for Russia and disrespectful of the rest of us sitting around this table.

We heard our Russian colleague say that there is nothing to see along the border. If there is nothing to see along the border, why does Russia behave like there is so much to hide? If there is nothing to see along the border, then why not let the mission expand and be able to go to all of the checkpoints as well as the spaces in between them?

That would build confidence, to confirm that in fact there is nothing to see -- if there is nothing to see.

But Russia can't be making sense when it says "there is nothing to see -- and yet we won't let you see that there's nothing to see."

Russia is behaving like there still remains a great deal to hide, both along the border and inside the territory of Ukraine where it continues to work alongside separatists, limiting the access of the SMM, and shooting down OSCE drones.

Our distinguished Russian colleague said that there are those sitting around this table who criticize Russia's "aid convoys." Here again, if Russia wants to send aid convoys, then it should work with the ICRC to send aid convoys in accordance with international standards.

But so far, Russia has only sent white truck convoys -- the contents of which are unknown, and which may be taking contents back into Russia. Because Russia behaves as if it has something to hide. It is hiding from the international community. It is violating Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. And it is not availing itself of well-established procedures to deliver aid.

Finally, the comment that there are those who want to reinterpret the Package of Measures. Let's remember, the Package of Measures was a package of measures to speed up implementation of the Minsk Protocol and Memorandum. The Package of Measures does talk about the return of control over the international border to Ukraine. But the Minsk Protocol talks about OSCE monitoring along the entire international border and the security zones on both sides.

There were not three different interpretations. I hope -- my distinguished Canadian colleague can speak up if I'm wrong -- but I think the united message that our distinguished Russian colleague should have heard from-- the United States, Ukraine, and Canada all quoted that fourth paragraph-- is that Russia has an obligation: Russia has signed up for this. Russia has signed up for international monitoring of the international border in the areas that are not under the Ukrainian government's control.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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In response to our Russian colleague, I agree that we should be serious. It is not serious for the Russian Federation to say that Russia has no involvement in this conflict or that this is an internal Ukrainian conflict. That is unserious, and it is disrespectful of everyone in this room.

And there is a trap here, where the Russian delegation routinely comes into this room and says things that are blatantly ridiculous. And when they get called on it, when anybody points out how ridiculous and disrespectful the things they are saying are -- no matter how gentle the tone in which they're delivered -- they accuse the other person of being the one who is saying things that are silly.

I think I have a pretty good track record of not calling anything "silly" in this chamber that hasn't been silly. And what the Russian Federation has said today is ridiculous.

Thank you.

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