

Original: ENGLISH



United States Mission to the OSCE

Closing Statement

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel Baer
To the Annual Security Review Conference
Vienna, June 26, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Swiss Chairmanship and Secretariat for hosting the Annual Security Review Conference.

It is a pertinent time for us to be reviewing security issues across the OSCE space. This year we have seen grievous threats to security, unprecedented in the nearly four decades since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act.

- We come together at this conference at a time when one participating State has illegally occupied and attempted to annex the territory of another participating State. We lament that the occupation and purported annexation of Crimea was not a focal point in many remarks by panelists, including in the session on Ukraine. We should lose no opportunity to remind the Russian Federation that it is isolated in its illegal and unprecedented act and it must end its occupation of the Crimean region of Ukraine.
- We come together at a time when, as Secretary Kerry said in Brussels yesterday, the threats we face are unlike the threats of the past. Indeed those threats, in the Secretary's words, include "soldiers who were hiding behind masks and without any identification on them, and a massive public relations campaign simultaneously denying the reality of what everybody was seeing on the ground; where you had this incredible capacity for deception, for denial, which was both a surrogate effort of a government and a linkage to activists, terrorists, and others."
- We come together at a time when subversive attacks, kidnapping, and intimidation by pro-Russia separatist groups have attempted to derail a peaceful, democratic, unified, and prosperous future for Ukraine, and have interfered with the work the Special Monitoring Mission undertakes on behalf of all Ukrainians and all of us.
- We come together at a time when eight of the monitors we collectively sent to Ukraine, eight of our own, remain hostages in the hands of pro-Russian separatists.

It is, indeed, a pertinent time to be holding an Annual Security Review conference.

Amid this critical period—a period of crisis that is a direct result of the Russian Federation’s ongoing violations of OSCE commitments -- we have aimed to take positive and productive steps forward.

- The participation in the conference of Ukraine’s new Foreign Minister, Pavlo Klimkin, was most welcome. In particular, the information he shared with us on government’s concerted and commendable efforts to implement a ceasefire and a peace plan which offers constitutional reform, broad decentralization of power, and local autonomy to Ukraine’s regions and communities, demonstrates his government’s commitment to a comprehensive and peaceful solution to the crisis. We thank the delegation of Ukraine for having worked diligently to facilitate Foreign Minister’s Klimkin’s participation at this conference. Today at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), President Poroshenko reiterated his government’s commitment to peace.
- We note that the OSCE has an important role to play in supporting the Government of Ukraine’s efforts. The presentation by Ambassador Tagliavini on developments in the tripartite talks was also useful and timely. And President Poroshenko has underscored the role that the OSCE can play in supporting peace.
- Finally, we welcome the OSCE’s use of its wide range of tools and institutions to deescalate the situation, share information, and pursue a peaceful resolution. As Brent Hartley, our Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, relayed in his opening remarks to this conference, we have seen the OSCE shine light on events on the ground, save lives, and support a democratic election in which Ukrainians demonstrated their unity in a desire for a European future.

With President Poroshenko’s peace plan, and the OSCE’s supportive tools in place, we call upon Russia to secure the border and halt the flow of fighters, weapons, and materiel into Ukraine. And Russia must use its private influence and public statements to send clear messages to separatists that they must observe the cease fire, and that the way forward is political dialogue and engagement for Ukrainians, whatever language they speak, and a return home to Russia for foreign operatives. As President Obama emphasized in his call with President Putin, words must be accompanied by actions. We are working closely with European partners to make sure that there will be consequences for further inaction.

Beyond the crisis that now dominates our thinking and our work, we would like to again note a few points related to the process of the conference. The late adoption of the agenda limited the ability to secure appropriate speakers and delegations from capitals, and to produce valuable, substantive discussion in some sessions. In addition, we lament that the agenda omitted specific reference to existing protracted conflicts in Georgia, Moldova, and Nagorno Karabakh. We should not shy away from discussing tough, but relevant issues, simply because it is difficult to achieve consensus. We hope to see stronger and more specific language in regards to protracted conflicts next year.

Finally, I would like to raise a few points related to conventional arms control.

Recent events in and around Ukraine and with Russia underscore the continued importance of conventional arms control and confidence-building measures as part of the European security architecture, now and in the future. Existing arrangements provide important mechanisms through which to share information about military forces and activities. However, our experiences in Ukraine and changes to military structures in Europe also demonstrate the need for these regimes to be improved and for certain mechanisms to be strengthened in order to provide additional transparency and predictability in the modern security environment.

Conventional arms control has contributed substantially to stability and security in Europe. We believe it has a role to play in building trust and confidence for the future as well. We remain determined to preserve, strengthen and modernize the conventional arms control regime in Europe--including the Vienna Document-- based on key principles and commitments, and will continue to explore ideas to this end.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.