

PC.DEL/199/14
3 March 2014

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 985th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 February 2014

Regarding the situation in Ukraine

Mr. Chairperson,

Russia is extremely concerned at the situation unfolding in Ukraine. We believe that it is important for all parties to adhere to the principles set out in the agreement of 21 February on the settlement of the crisis. It is clearly stated in that agreement that if things are to return to normal it is essential not only to restore the Constitution of 2004 but then also to start constitutional reform immediately. The reform should ensure participation in political life by all political forces and regions of the country without exception in order that the interests of all Ukrainians are taken into account and that no region or citizen of that country feels disadvantaged. We should like to understand what is happening with the constitutional reform and the process to reconcile all Ukrainians.

The militants have still not been disarmed, as was stipulated in the agreement of 21 February, they are refusing to get off the streets of the cities and to vacate administrative buildings, and acts of violence continue.

The fragile peace that had existed until now between different faiths and religious groups has been shattered. The threat of physical violence against priests and of the destruction of churches has increased.

We believe that the OSCE should condemn in the most resolute terms calls to ban the Russian language, to turn the Russian-speaking population into non-citizens, to restrict freedom of expression and to close down undesirable political parties.

A number of steps taken recently by Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, are alarming. One such step was to repeal the Law on the Principles of the State Language Policy adopted in accordance with the requirements of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This affects not only Russians but also other ethnic groups living in Ukraine. We agree with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Astrid Thors, that this decision could lead to further unrest.

The situation with the media is also cause for concern. We are aware of attempts to prohibit broadcasting by companies from countries that are not party to the European Convention on Transfrontier Television. This would be a serious violation of freedom of speech. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović, made a statement to this effect yesterday. We hope that she will have a better understanding of the situation once she has visited Ukraine.

We believe that the crisis in Ukraine is not only a serious challenge for the OSCE but also an opportunity for the Organization to show what it's made of and make a contribution to preventing further deterioration of the situation.

We welcome the efforts of the Swiss Chairmanship. The OSCE has tools that could be used to help stabilize the situation in Ukraine. The Organization's institutions could be involved in carrying out constitutional reforms, protecting national minorities, organizing elections and returning the situation to a legal framework.

We emphasize that any form of assistance, including assistance by the OSCE, must be carried out at the request of the legitimate Ukrainian authorities and with unconditional respect for the sovereignty of Ukraine.

The important thing now is to send a clear signal that indulging manifestations of extremism is unacceptable.

We reiterate Russia's position of principle regarding non-interference in the internal affairs of Ukraine. It is in our interest that the country remain part of the pan-European family in every sense of this word.

Let me now turn to some concerns expressed today by our colleagues. A surprise inspection of the combat readiness of troops in the Western and Central Military Districts has begun in Russia on the orders of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. Similar exercises were held last year. They have nothing to do with what is happening in Ukraine.

The inspection began at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, 26 February, and will continue until 3 March. By 7 March, all the troops involved in the exercise will have returned to their places of permanent deployment. Around 150,000 military personnel from various services and branches of the armed forces will be involved in the inspection. Of these, 38,000 troops are in territories covered by the Vienna Document 2011; they are airborne troops, ground troops and marines. This contingent of military personnel will be in operation for no more than 72 hours. This time-frame does not envisage the involvement of foreign observers.

The relevant notifications regarding these exercises were sent using the procedure established in the Vienna Document.

Additional questions on this subject could be raised next week during the Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting.

As for the alleged violation by Russia of the basic agreements regarding the Black Sea Fleet, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation has announced that the Russian Federation fleet is adhering strictly to these agreements during the current difficult situation.

The movement of individual units of armoured equipment of the Black Sea Fleet has been carried out in accordance with the basic agreements. This did not require any additional agreements.

Thank you for your attention.