



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

NORWAY ON THE SITUATION IN EASTERN UKRAINE

As delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 5 April 2017

Mr Chair,

We reiterate our full support to the SMM. The mission is an important source of independent information from the conflict zone, and contributes to easing the suffering of the civilian population. The monitors are doing a most commendable job.

We are deeply and increasingly concerned by the situation on the ground. The Minsk agreements are being ignored, as is the SMM's mandate. The parties block the SMM from fulfilling its mandate by restricting access, and further limit the mission's effectiveness and ability to operate through threats, intimidation, smear campaigns, and destruction of UAVs and other assets. What the mission is allowed to see and report on, does not provide a full and accurate picture of the situation on the ground.

This is deplorable and completely unacceptable. The parties must make sure there are consequences for threatening monitors or limiting their access. That includes also the individual perpetrators, who so far have walked free in virtually all instances. Either the JCCC must take real action, or an alternative mechanism for investigating incidents and holding those responsible to account must be developed. Reported instances of Russian JCCC officers blaming the SMM for security incidents indicate that the JCCC in certain respects constitute a security liability for SMM monitors. We also encourage the Trilateral Contact Group to make full use of its role in ensuring accountability for security incidents.

The situation is significantly worse in rebel controlled areas, but all parties are responsible for the lack of respect for the SMM. We expect all sides, including the Russian Federation, to live up to their obligation to ensure full, safe and unhindered access.

We appreciate the SMM's efforts to ensure the safety and security of the monitors, including follow-up of the recommendations from last summer's security visit. Certain structural challenges nevertheless persist. We expect further professionalization of the security organization, and a structure that delegates necessary responsibility to the team level.

We hope the agreement last week in Minsk on a renewed ceasefire will hold. Based on experience from previous agreements, we will judge the parties on their actions, not their words or signatures. Indications from the past few days have not been encouraging.

Thank you, Mr Chair