



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON UKRAINE

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 17 February 2015

Mr Chairman,

I thank Ambassadors Apakan and Tagliavini as well as Director Link for their updates.

In a press release last Thursday, Norwegian Foreign Minister Børge Brende welcomed the agreement reached in Minsk and thanked Germany and France for their leadership. At the same time, he underlined that the agreement must be implemented, and that we must be realistic in our expectations. Previous ceasefires have failed because Russia and the separatists it backs have failed to live up to them.

Mr Chairman,

The SMM and other sources report that the ceasefire is largely holding. That is encouraging. Not least for the civilian population. We urge all parties to cease all hostilities and allow unrestricted access to all areas both for the SMM and for humanitarian organizations.

Mr Chairman,

Attempts by the Russia-backed separatists to define Debaltseve out of the ceasefire area give cause for great concern. Such attempts run counter to the letter and spirit of the Minsk accords.

We call on Russia to use its influence over the separatists to bring about a cessation of hostilities all along the line of contact. Also Russia must publicly condemn all ceasefire violations, and state in clear terms that the ceasefire area covers also Debaltseve.

We are concerned by Russia stating that it is only party to the Minsk agreements as a mediator. All signatories are bound by the agreements and must implement them in good faith.

Mr Chairman,

We reaffirm our strong support to the SMM as they refocus their efforts to the challenging tasks given by the three Minsk agreements. We commend Ambassador Apakan's determination to ensure the safety and security of the monitors in this difficult process.

I am pleased to inform you that the tenth Norwegian monitor will arrive in Ukraine later this week. We will continue to nominate suitable candidates.

Mr Chairman,

The accord reached in Minsk could not have happened without Ambassador Tagliavini's tireless efforts in the trilateral contact group. We greatly appreciate her resolve to keep the group together and help bring an end to the human suffering in Eastern Ukraine.

Mr Chairman,

Ukraine is facing great tasks not only in the east of the country. Difficult reforms are ongoing to transform the country, to tackle corruption and to address human rights challenges. The OSCE has a role to play also in this regard.

ODIHR has played and must continue to play an important role in monitoring elections in Ukraine. We should all take careful note of Director Link's points on the requirements for successful monitoring of elections in certain areas in Donbass.

Mr Chairman,

Norway will continue to support Ukraine's reform efforts, and will this year give 32 million Euros in bilateral support.

Mr Chairman,

We have realistic expectations for the ceasefire, but we must not overlook the effect we are already seeing on the ground. The ceasefire has already given relief to civilians living in the area of conflict. Moreover, it is in itself of great importance that the parties were brought back to the negotiating table. We urge the parties to keep communication lines open.

First of all, however, deeds must follow words. We must see a complete cessation of hostilities.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.