



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR APAKAN AND AMBASSADOR SAJDIK

As delivered to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 4 November 2015

Mr Chairman,

We aligned ourselves with the statement made by Luxembourg on behalf of the EU, and would like to make a few additional remarks.

We join others in welcoming Ambassadors Apakan and Sajdik to the Permanent Council.

Their visit comes as we see a concerning uptick in the violence around Donetsk Airport. We call on all parties to fully respect the ceasefire, as this is fundamental for implementation of other parts of the Minsk agreements.

Mr Chairman,

We reiterate our strong support for Ambassador Apakan and the SMM. The mission's importance continues to increase as new tasks are added. We commend the SMM's swift and professional response to new developments, especially the verification regime set up for withdrawal of weapons, including new requirements for heavy weapons.

The number of monitors has increased rapidly over the last months. We welcome the SMM's well-founded approach to further expansion, and underline our trust in the mission's competence in this regard. It is reassuring that the safety and security of the monitors remain a top priority.

We welcome the increased administrative capacity of the SMM. This instills confidence in the mission's ability to handle a growing staff and an increasingly complex mission. The enhanced capacity should be followed by increased leeway, as unwarranted interference would undermine the efficacy of the SMM.

Mr Chairman,

Complete implementation of the Minsk agreements is imperative. This includes full cooperation with the SMM. However, access continues to be obstructed and UAVs continue to be jammed, especially in separatist controlled areas. We welcome yesterday's controlled visit to a part of the state border controlled by the so-called "LPR". Access to the border nevertheless continues to be systematically restricted. Separatists also block the establishment of additional Forward Patrol Bases. This is unacceptable.

Mr Chairman,

As the only international observers in the conflict zone, the SMM is a crucial source of information. Accurate reporting is essential for our understanding of the situation on the ground. We commend the general quality of reports, and trust that the SMM will continue to strive for accuracy and consistency.

Mr Chairman,

We continue to support Ambassador Sajdik's efforts in the Trilateral Contact Group and its subordinate working groups. The political working group should agree on modalities for elections in separatist controlled areas as a matter of urgency. Elections must be carried out in accordance with Ukrainian law and OSCE standards, and must be observed by ODIHR.

Mr Chairman,

We remain concerned about the humanitarian situation in Eastern parts of Ukraine. We appreciate the efforts by the SMM and the Trilateral Contact Group to improve the situation.

The separatists' restrictions on humanitarian actors are appalling and must stop immediately. We hope UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien's recent visit to the area will prove helpful.

Humanitarian access is a matter of principle, and should not be the subject of political negotiations. We urge all parties to adhere to the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. We repeat our call on the Russian Federation to use its influence over the separatists, and publicly denounce their unjustifiable restrictions on humanitarian actors.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.