



**Remarks to open to the Special Debate: “The OSCE’s Response to the Crisis In and Around Ukraine”**

*OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Ilkka Kanerva*

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Fellow parliamentarians,  
Distinguished guests,  
Friends,

Today’s special debate on the OSCE’s response to the situation in Ukraine marks the fourth consecutive time that our Assembly has taken up the crisis in this format. We did it last year here, then in Baku, and then in Geneva. Over that period there have been ebbs and flows in the fighting -- but today, as we meet to consider what our Organization has done, what it can do, and what it should do in response to the crisis, there is some hope now for a diplomatic solution to take hold and for certain violations of OSCE principles to end. And indeed, both the fighting and those violations **MUST** end. True, lasting commitment must now be demonstrated in practice by all sides, and in particular by the illegal separatists and those who influence them. **BUT** -- we all know that there have been ceasefire violations from the start. The SMM reported just hours ago that there was “intense shelling” in Donetsk city. With every rocket launched, hope for a diplomatic solution grows dimmer. As lawmakers from the OSCE’s 57 states we must be vocal and unequivocal in furthering the goal of peace in and around Ukraine. Now more than ever.

This Minsk roadmap was made possible through the great leadership shown by France and Germany, and we all thank them for their efforts. However, beyond the ceasefire violations, I see that there are many potential pitfalls before Ukraine rightfully regains full control of its border with Russia, as is envisioned by the end of this year. It is indefensible and downright cynical to hear rebel leaders claim that the ceasefire does not apply in certain areas or that OSCE monitors are not given safety guarantees and full access. It is equally cynical for anyone to question

Ukraine's right to act in self-defense against these illegal groups. During our debate today, I hope to hear from our Russian parliamentarians a decisive statement in support of the Minsk measures, including its stipulations on the disarmament of illegal groups without exception and the withdrawal of all heavy weapons, which increasingly made their way into the illegal separatists' hands ahead of the ceasefire. Our Russian colleagues certainly must realize that the sooner this happens, the sooner the needs of the civilian population of eastern Ukraine will be met, as envisioned in the Minsk package of measures.

I likewise look forward to hearing from our Ukrainian counterparts how they assess this deal's chances of success and the steps so far to implement it, as well as about what time frame is being considered for next steps, such as new legislative measures and Constitutional adjustments.

Let us also consider today the idea of an international peacekeeping mission in eastern Ukraine, which, far from undermining the work done by the Special Monitoring Mission could perhaps complement the OSCE's work in making the peace process viable.

That brings me back to the OSCE. As you all know, the peace roadmap relies extensively on OSCE officials and monitors. Specifically, the OSCE is responsible for monitoring and verifying the ceasefire regime as well as the pull-out of heavy weapons. OSCE personnel are also to supervise the withdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine. I warmly welcome our introductory speakers, who have worked day and night in support of a diplomatic resolution to this conflict:

Ambassador Adam Kobieracki, the Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre;

Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan, the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine;

and a previously unannounced speaker -- Heidi Tagliavini, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and the Trilateral Contact Group.

We all look forward to hearing the latest from them on what OSCE monitors are seeing on the ground and about the opportunities and challenges they foresee.

Before I turn to our esteemed guests, I'll like to make two more points:

As we all have realized by now, the international community is largely no longer talking about Crimea. Russia's annexation of Crimea and Crimea's rightful status within Ukraine are absent from the package agreed in Minsk. But let me make it absolutely clear that Crimea, and the breach of Ukraine's territorial integrity there, should not and cannot be forgotten.

Finally, I would like to make an appeal on a humanitarian level. Whatever the politics that are involved in this crisis and its resolution, and beyond the strengths and weaknesses in our own Organization that this crisis has revealed, the fighting must permanently end because of all of the

lives that are being affected. This is a humanitarian tragedy. The United Nations has stated that the death toll from the conflict has risen to more than 5,500 people. That's more than 20 times the number of parliamentarians in attendance at our Winter Meeting. Take a moment and imagine that horror.

On that somber note, I'd like to turn to our speakers for their remarks before hearing from you, the OSCE's parliamentarians.

Thank you.