

PC.DEL/1007/14

29 August 2014

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1014th (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

28 August 2014

**On the situation in Ukraine and the continuing violations of the norms of
international humanitarian law during the punitive operation
in eastern Ukraine**

Mr. Chairperson,

First of all, I should like to draw the attention of the representatives to the ill-mannered and actually offensive language directed at the Russian leadership by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America in his statement. Such language is incompatible both with the ethical norms of diplomatic relations and with the unwritten rules regarding statements in the Permanent Council. Evidently, the Permanent Representative of the United States of America is unfamiliar with them. I find that his statement tends to kindle antagonism. This is not what diplomats should be doing. I think it would not be fitting for me to respond in the same tone.

We are extremely concerned by the deteriorating humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine as a consequence of the continuing military operation by the Ukrainian security forces against the inhabitants of Donbas. It is gradually taking on the proportions of a humanitarian disaster. This is confirmed by the recent increasingly disquieting reports by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). They clearly state that the deteriorating humanitarian situation results from the continued hostilities, air and artillery attacks on houses and other infrastructural objects in Donbas and Luhansk. Every day the centre and other districts of Donetsk, Luhansk and other cities and towns are bombarded by mortars, artillery, multiple rocket launchers and even powerful ballistic missiles.

According to the latest information from the United Nations Office, 2,249 people including 23 children have been killed and 6,033 people including 38 children injured. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has increased to 190,000, and there are now 242,000 Ukrainian refugees in Russia, compared with 188,000 a week ago. There are still almost 4 million people in the regions touched by the conflict.

Because of damage to the infrastructure, Donetsk has been without water for over ten days. The water supply to Luhansk has been cut off for over 20 days. No fewer than 20 hospitals in Donbas are out of action, and a further 17 have been destroyed or are seriously damaged. There is a critical shortage of medical personnel. In Luhansk there is a high risk of the outbreak of infectious diseases.

The UNOCHA also notes that because of the absence of national legislation concerning IDPs, the majority of these people are deprived of their basic rights: pension payments are being withheld, they are unable to obtain work and are being refused medical care and social welfare. Social tensions are growing in Ukraine between the IDPs and the population of the host regions.

Because of the destruction of 290 schools and the absence of elementary security, the start of the school year in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions has been effectively disrupted.

Ms. Valerie Amos, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, visited Ukraine from 22 to 24 August. Following her visit, she expressed serious concern about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Ukraine in recent months, particularly with the approaching onset of the cold weather.

Under these circumstances, the Russian Federation cannot remain indifferent to the tragedy besetting the people of south-east Ukraine. A convoy with humanitarian aid has been sent to the Luhansk region. We provided detailed information about its scope and contents to the Ukrainian authorities and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and also at the last meeting of the Permanent Council.

We have endeavoured to comply strictly with the norms and principles of international humanitarian law. At the outset we obtained agreement from the Ukrainian authorities, confirmed in the official notification from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine of 12 August 2014. It is a pity that the esteemed representative of the European Union was not informed of this fact. We have worked in close contact with the Ukrainian border and customs services. They were well represented – 58 officials including 16 customs officers – when the convoy crossed the border, and there are still many officials at the Russian Donetsk border crossing point. Everyone, including representatives of the media, had the possibility of ascertaining that the trucks contained nothing besides humanitarian cargos and that after the aid had been delivered all of the trucks returned empty to the territory of the Russian Federation. The aid was distributed through 35 distribution hubs with the assistance of the ICRC. It is a pity that this was not seen from London.

No doubt this aid provided temporary relief for the civilian population but it is not sufficient to fundamentally resolve the humanitarian crisis, which continues. The inhabitants of Luhansk and the surrounding area are in urgent need of substantial additional humanitarian aid. Members of the Red Cross in Luhansk are reporting to their headquarters about the continuing shelling of residential areas in the city, the absence of telephone lines and other means of communication, the shortage of food, drinking water and medicines and the fact that for weeks many people have had no news of relatives. The Red Cross stresses the urgent need to redress the situation, calling on all sides to refrain from the indiscriminate use of arms, and points to the inadmissibility of attacks on civilians or civilian infrastructure such as houses, schools, kindergartens, medical facilities or medical transports. We know that such objects (kindergartens, markets, churches) are regularly shelled and destroyed not only from

journalists' reports but also from the reports by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine.

The ICRC, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and United Nations humanitarian structures as well as the governments of many countries have called for a continuation of the aid.

We know that the Ukrainian Government directed the aid convoy to Luhansk province, where it was distributed with the aid of the ICRC. We are also aware of plans announced by the European Union and a number of other countries for providing humanitarian assistance to the civilian population of Ukraine. Russia will continue to take part in all of these efforts.

On 24 August 2014, an official notification was sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine announcing the intention by the Russian Federation to prepare a second convoy of humanitarian supplies. Attached to the note was a detailed list of the types and quantities of the planned shipment. It also expressed the hope for the close co-operation of the Ukrainian authorities in arranging all of the necessary formalities. We trust that they will not be as drawn-out as they were with the first convoy. A delay would be in direct contravention of the commitments by all States under international humanitarian law. We would like all the necessary conditions for the delivery of the second convoy to be arranged as quickly as possible in co-ordination with the Ukrainian authorities and the ICRC and with the involvement of the Ukrainian border and customs services and the Red Cross. We firmly believe that this should be done this week.

A similar note was also sent to the ICRC inviting it to continue its co-operation.

We urge our Ukrainian colleagues and the ICRC to play an active part in continuing the humanitarian mission. For our part, we remain willing to use our contacts with the militias to ensure that they safeguard the security not only of the Russian convoy but also of the humanitarian aid that Ukraine sends to the south-east, as it has said it will. This was mentioned specifically in the notification sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Mr. Chairperson,

The recent talks in Minsk between the Presidents of the Member States of the Customs Union and Ukraine in the presence of Catherine Ashton were fruitful. They demonstrated the ability of the participants to work in any framework and the willingness to help the Ukrainians to seek and find consensus amongst themselves while respecting the interests of all minorities and cultural, linguistic and religious communities in each region. We hope that they will be followed by practical measures capable of bringing peace to the region. In our opinion, the OSCE has an important role to play in this process.

We appeal once again to the Ukrainian Government and the influence that the United States of America and the European Union might have on it to bring about an urgent end to the use of force in the east of Ukraine and a return to a peaceful negotiated process and to commence fulfilment of the agreements set forth in the Geneva statement by the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the United States of America and the European Union of 17 April 2014 to refrain from the use of force, alleviate the humanitarian situation and establish broad national dialogue immediately with the participation of all regions of Ukraine.

At the same time, I should like to emphasize that we shall seek a full investigation of the crimes that have been committed: the tragedy in Odessa, similar events in Mariupol, the attack by a military aeroplane on the regional administration building in Luhansk and the excesses by the Aidar Volunteer Battalion against the inhabitants of Luhansk province. By the same token, there is also a need to establish the real reasons for the destruction of the Malaysian passenger plane. The investigations are clearly being obfuscated.

As for the statements about the incursion of Russian armoured vehicles, this is nothing new. Statements like this were to be heard last week and the week before. We refuted them then and we refute them today. The only incident in Ukraine was when a paratrooper unit that was patrolling the unmarked border crossed over it by mistake. As you know, it is still unmarked and it is therefore not difficult to lose one's bearings. Our military personnel did not put up any resistance when they were detained. Moreover, they had all the necessary documents to establish their identity. Obviously, spies would not have such documents in their possession on missions.

The reasons for their presence in the border region has already been discussed. Given the intensified hostilities near our border and the constant shelling from Ukrainian territory – even if it is unintentional – we are obliged to take the necessary measures to strengthen security to prevent the conflict spilling over into our territory.

We expect the Ukrainians to treat Russian soldiers with the same humanity as we treat their soldiers and border guards who frequently cross the Russian border in tens or even hundreds to seek asylum on Russian territory. Yesterday, 60 Ukrainian soldiers crossed over the Donetsk region border in the south. In the first ten days of August, a group of Ukrainian soldiers numbering around 500 men crossed into Russian territory at the Gukovo checkpoint. They were subsequently all bussed back to Ukraine. While the Ukrainian troops were in Russia they were given the necessary assistance, including medical care.

Thank you for your attention.