



Kingdom of Belgium

Speech by H.E. Mrs Karen Van Vlierberge, Ambassador, Deputy
Permanent Representative

at the United Nations Security Council briefing
on Ukraine

New York, 12 February 2019

Mr President,

I would like to thank the distinguished speakers for their informative and enlightening presentations.

Mr President,

Four years after the conclusion of the Minsk Agreements, there have been no more large-scale violent confrontations, but the ceasefire is still violated almost every day, leading to death and injury, not only among combatants, but also among the civilian population. The implementation of the key provisions of these agreements remains a dead letter, although it is the only way to achieve a lasting political solution to this conflict. We therefore call on both sides to implement the Minsk Agreements swiftly and fully, as demanded by resolution 2202 of this Council, and to honour their commitments.

We support the efforts of the Trilateral Contact Group in this regard as well as those of the Normandy format.

We call on Russia to immediately stop fuelling the conflict by providing financial and military support to the armed groups. We also call on Russia to use its influence over these armed formations to encourage them to fully respect their commitments under the Minsk Agreements.

We regret the obstacles to the proper performance of the monitoring and reporting tasks of the special monitoring mission to Ukraine. This mission plays a vital role in reducing tensions. We strongly encourage the parties to the conflict to respect the mandate of the mission and allow it safe and unhindered access to all Ukrainian territory, including along the border between Ukraine and Russia and to Crimea.

Mr President,

The lack of progress in the implementation of the Minsk Agreements is being felt on the ground. We remain deeply concerned by reports of the presence of Russian

military equipment and personnel in areas controlled by armed formations. The presence of heavy weapons, which contravenes the Minsk Agreements, continues to be a threat to the civilian population on both sides of the contact line. We call for the complete withdrawal of these weapons and the disengagement of troops from designated areas. We welcome the extension by the Ukrainian authorities of the Law on the special Status of Donbas, which is one of the cornerstones of the Minsk Agreements. Belgium nevertheless condemns the holding of elections last November in the rebel territories of Donetsk and Lugansk; these elections violated both the letter and the spirit of the Minsk Agreements.

Mr President,

Belgium remains very concerned by the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine. We urge all parties to allow full access in accordance with humanitarian principles. We are particularly concerned that critical civilian infrastructure, such as the water supply network, is being targeted. As the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs mentioned, 3.5 million people are in need of assistance and protection due to the widespread presence of mines, growing psychological trauma, and a lack of access to basic services. We share a deep concern about their suffering.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and we therefore do not recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia, which we consider contrary to international law.

Recent tensions in the Azov Sea and the Kerch Strait due to Russian actions have only widened the gap between the two sides.

The only way to bridge this gap is through dialogue, which we strongly encourage.

Thank you.