

# OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian Checkpoints on the Russian Ukrainian border: UK statement

Thank you Mr Chairperson. I would like to start by thanking Ambassador Varga for updating the Permanent Council, and for demonstrating leadership by introducing measures to protect staff working in the Mission during the COVID-19 global crisis, as well as the local population.

The Minsk agreements call for permanent monitoring of the Ukraine-Russia State border and verification by the OSCE. Sadly your Mission cannot provide comprehensive monitoring of the border because of the absurd limitations placed upon it. You are only present at two border checkpoints along an uncontrolled segment of the border that stretches for hundreds of kilometres. Even within these two checkpoints, the observers' freedom of movement is extremely limited, creating blind spots. This impedes their capacity to fully observe activity at the checkpoints, including the trains that pass over the border near the Gukovo border checkpoint. The observers are prohibited from using any additional observation tools such as cameras or binoculars. They are also unable to check vehicles or interview people crossing the border.

Nonetheless, the Mission is still able to provide useful insight to the international community. The Mission's spot reports inform us about the so-called "humanitarian convoys" that Russia sends in violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Mission bears witness to the people in military-style outfits crossing the border from Russia into Ukraine. Your reporting also demonstrates that in sharp contrast to the restrictions imposed even on the Special Monitoring Mission by Russia-backed armed formations at the line of contact, movement continues, albeit reduced, from Russia to non-government controlled areas of Ukraine.

We also very much value the cooperation between your Mission and the SMM – noting the important link between ceasefire monitoring and border monitoring in helping to stabilise the security situation. We would be grateful if you could share more details of this.

The UK supports the Mission's work and pays tribute to the hard working staff serving in it. We recognise that the situation caused by the pandemic has made their role even more challenging and we commend them for continuing to fulfil the Mission's observation tasks. This is on top of the everyday complications already caused by Russia's refusal to grant the Mission legal status, such as having to operate on a cash only basis and without the assistance of locally recruited staff.

The UK will continue to support the work of this important Mission. We call on the Russian Federation in the strongest terms to end the unnecessary limitations they have placed on the Mission's work. The establishment of genuinely comprehensive monitoring of the entire segment of the Ukraine-

Russia State border outside Ukrainian government control, as well as the restoration of full Ukrainian control over that border, is essential. The UK joins the many other States around this table in calling for an extension of the Mission to the entirety of the uncontrolled section of the border. If Russia truly has nothing to hide, then they should cease their opposition to this expansion.

Finally, let me also take this opportunity to reiterate the UK's unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.