

Speech: “This is only the meaningful path to long-term peace in Ukraine. And until this path is taken, sanctions against Russia must remain in place.”

Thank you Mr President and I welcome Foreign Minister Kurz to the Security Council. I'm grateful for your briefing just now. Your chairmanship of the OSCE, together with Austria hosting the OSCE and parts of the United Nations, shows how central your country is to international cooperation and to the rules-based system.

Sadly, as we heard here yesterday, the rules-based system is under threat. It's a threat that we talk about often in this chamber, but to the residents of cities like Marinka, this threat is a horrifying, daily reality. For the past three years, the people there have lived in fear, subject to the daily, unrelenting dangers that have become the norm on the front line in eastern Ukraine. Residents there speak of daily sniper fire, of daily shelling, the daily scramble for shelter. For nearly three years, they have survived without gas supplies, in the face of plummeting temperatures every winter.

These are the consequences of Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This is what happens when the rules based system is attacked. We cannot allow this to become the new normal. We must use all of the tools at our disposal in response.

The OSCE has a critical role to play – and I'd like to commend the role of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in particular, working tirelessly under the able direction of Chief Monitor Apakan. It's thanks to the bravery of the OSCE's monitors that we know what's going on in places like Marinka. It's thanks to them that we know that ceasefire violations this year have already reached record highs.

It is unacceptable that the Mission continues to be fired upon and to face restrictions on access. Such actions, so often perpetrated by the separatists, only fuels suspicion that the separatists are concealing activity at odds with the Minsk agreements.

So I hope that we can all be clear today that aggression towards monitors must stop and the Mission must be given unrestricted access to all of Ukraine, including the disengagement areas and those parts of the border with Russia not under Ukraine's control.

As we heard yesterday, the long term solution to the situation in Eastern Ukraine requires Russia to end its destabilising activities in the region, comply with its commitments under the Minsk agreements, withdraw its weapons

and personnel, use its considerable influence over the separatists to bring an end to the killing, and return Crimea to its rightful place as part of Ukraine. This is only the meaningful path to long-term peace in Ukraine. And until this path is taken, sanctions against Russia must remain in place.

Beyond Ukraine, we should not lose sight of this Council's need to work closely with the Austrian OSCE chairmanship to resolve other issues affecting the region and help protect fundamental rights and freedoms. These include protracted conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabkh.

We also value the vital role the OSCE plays in risk reduction in the region and we welcome the launch of the Structured Dialogue. We support your focus, Mr Foreign Minister, on youth and radicalisation, where the OSCE with its cross-dimensional approach to security can add real value.

If the OSCE is to respond to these and other challenges, we must also continue to strengthen the organisation. One way to do that is through strong appointments and I'm pleased that the UK has put forward an excellent candidate for the High Commissioner on National Minorities position in the OSCE as a sign of our continued commitment to the organisation.

We are also pleased that our Ambassador to the OSCE is chairing the OSCE Human Dimension Committee this year and working closely with the Austrian Chairmanship.

In conclusion, Mr President, events in Eastern Ukraine reinforce just how important the OSCE is to international cooperation. The work being done there is vital to the beleaguered residents of Marinka and to all Ukrainians in the East of the country. Sadly events in Ukraine highlight the threats that countries in the OSCE area, and the rules based system as a whole, continue to face. If we are to respond to them effectively, we must continue to strengthen the OSCE, and with it, this Council's cooperation.

Thank you.