

Beat: Politics

NATO-Ukraine Commission

Joint statement

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USPA NEWS - Foreign Ministers of the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC), met today in Antalya, Turkey, to review progress made on their joint cooperative agenda as well as the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea of Ukraine.

Joint statement of the NATO-Ukraine Commission -

We, the Foreign Ministers of the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC), met today in Antalya, Turkey, to review progress made on our joint cooperative agenda. We also discussed the security situation in eastern Ukraine, the implementation of the Minsk agreements and prospects for a lasting settlement, as well as the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea of Ukraine.

We reaffirm our strong commitment to an independent, peaceful and prosperous Ukraine. We stand firm in our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and Ukraine's right to decide its own future and foreign policy course free from outside interference, as set out in the Helsinki Final Act. We strongly condemn Russia's aggressive actions and continued violation of international law and its international obligations. We call on Russia to fully abide by international law.

More than one year has passed since Russia's illegal and illegitimate self-declared "annexation" of Crimea, which we do not, and will not, recognize, and which we call on Russia to reverse. We are deeply concerned about the worsening human rights situation on the peninsula. We urge Russia to respect the rights and freedoms of the entire local population, including the native Crimean Tatars and other members of local communities, and to allow for international monitoring of the human rights situation in Crimea.

We condemn Russia's ongoing and wide-ranging military build-up in Crimea, and are concerned by Russia's efforts and stated plans for further military build-up in the Black Sea region, which will potentially have further implications for the stability of the region. We are also deeply concerned by statements of the Russian leadership with regard to possible future stationing of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems in Crimea, which would be destabilizing.

We reaffirm our strong support for the settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine by diplomatic means and dialogue. We welcome the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk agreements signed on 12 February 2015 and the accompanying Declaration of the four Heads of State and Government, and support the efforts of the OSCE and its Special Monitoring Mission (SMM).

We welcome the initial steps taken to implement the Package of Measures, including most recently the convening of the working groups under the Trilateral Contact Group. However, we are concerned by the ceasefire violations along the line of contact primarily by Russian-backed separatists, the use of heavy weapons, and the continued Russian support for separatists, including the transfer of weapons, which are all in contradiction to the Minsk agreements.

We are also concerned by the continued obstruction of the work of the OSCE SMM, principally by the separatists, as well as increased number of incidents which threaten the monitors' safety and security. We call for full adherence to the ceasefire and permanent and unfettered access for the OSCE SMM to implement its mandate. All signatories to the Minsk agreements bear responsibility to comply with the commitments to which they signed up, and to ensure their full implementation.

Russia has a significant responsibility in this regard; it must stop its continued and deliberate destabilization of eastern Ukraine through its political, military and financial support for militants, withdraw its forces and military equipment from Ukrainian territory and along the Ukrainian border, and fully support a political solution of the conflict, which has claimed more than six thousand lives and gravely affected the humanitarian situation for civilians. Russia must also use its influence over the separatists to ensure that they abide by the terms of the Minsk agreements. All hostages and unlawfully detained persons must be released, including Nadia

Savchenko and Oleg Sentsov.

Allies welcome the steps undertaken by the Government of Ukraine to promote key constitutional reforms and reconciliation. The work of the Constitutional Commission and the local elections scheduled for October 2015 should be instrumental in decentralizing power, promoting an inclusive political process, and further consolidating the rule of law and democracy in Ukraine. Recognising the challenging circumstances, Allies strongly encourage the Government of Ukraine to continue reform efforts and wherever possible, accelerate them.

The success of these wide-ranging reforms, including combating corruption and promoting an inclusive political process, based on democratic values, respect for human rights, minorities and the rule of law, will be crucial in laying the groundwork for a prosperous and peaceful Ukraine firmly anchored among European democracies committed to common values. Allies will continue to support Ukraine in its pursuit of deep and comprehensive reforms, including through the Annual National Programme (ANP).

Our increasingly close cooperation in the framework of our Distinctive Partnership will enhance Ukraine's ability to provide for its own security, and further improve the interoperability between Ukrainian and NATO Forces. As stated in Wales, all 28 Allies are enhancing support for Ukraine, including through NATO. Allies have deployed additional support to the NATO Liaison Office in Kyiv and provided advisors to the Government of Ukraine, including the Ministry of Defence.

We are making progress on the Trust Funds on command, control, communications and computers, logistics and standardization, cyber defence, military career transition and medical rehabilitation of injured servicemen and exploring the possibility of additional Trust Funds to support Ukraine. We will continue to strengthen our cooperation as Ukraine proceeds with work on defence and security sector reforms, strategic communications, and capacity-building projects through the Science for Peace and Security Programme.

We look forward to Ukraine's hosting of the field exercise of the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre in September 2015 in Yavoriv near Lviv. Ukraine looks forward to further deepening its strategic dialogue and information exchange with the Alliance.

Ukraine welcomes the humanitarian, medical and other non-lethal support being provided by many Allies on a bilateral basis. It also welcomes Allies' bilateral assistance aimed at helping Ukraine better defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

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Recalling earlier statements of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, we reiterate that an independent, sovereign and stable Ukraine, firmly committed to democracy and the rule of law, is key to Euro-Atlantic security.

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