

## **The commitment of the Swiss Chairmanship to a resolution of the Ukraine crisis**

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The Ukraine crisis played a key role in the work of the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship. The crisis was a major challenge and at the same time an opportunity to make the most effective use of OSCE instruments to find a peaceful political solution.

The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Didier Burkhalter, drew on top-level diplomatic contacts and made every effort to find a solution based on dialogue and respect for international law.

Under the active Chairmanship of Switzerland, the Permanent Council of the OSCE took a series of important decisions relating to the situation in Ukraine, all of which were based on the principle of consensus.

- On 21 March 2014, the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna issued a mandate for a Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. Up to 500 unarmed civilian OSCE monitors were mandated to report on political developments, security matters, human rights and minority issues, and to promote dialogue on the ground.
- On 24 July 2014 it was also decided to send OSCE observers to two Russian border checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border. The OSCE observers are present at the border checkpoints around the clock. The Chairmanship is currently working on extending the length and, as far as possible, also the scope of the mandate.

Mr Burkhalter also appointed experienced diplomats as special envoys as part of concrete initiatives:

- Ambassador Tim Guldemann supported the activities of the OSCE Chairmanship during an early stage of the crisis.
- Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger was tasked with providing support during round-table discussions on national unity that were held throughout Ukraine in the run-up to the early presidential elections organised by the Ukrainian government in May 2014.
- Mr Burkhalter also appointed Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini as Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office to the recently established Trilateral Contact Group, in which Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE Chairmanship are represented. The Contact Group, which meets regularly in Kyiv and also holds frequent discussions with representatives of illegal armed groups in eastern Ukraine, is the only permanent body in which these parties hold regular and structured meetings about the ceasefire, peace plans and humanitarian questions.

On 5 September 2015, a protocol on steps to be taken to implement Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's peace plan and President Putin's initiatives was agreed within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group. Representatives of illegal armed groups from eastern Ukraine also attended the meeting. A ceasefire entered into force on the day the protocol was signed. A memorandum signed in Minsk on 19 September 2014 established the parameters for the implementation of the ceasefire.

Despite a marked reduction in violence the ceasefire remains fragile. Progress in the political process to stabilise and de-escalate the situation is necessary. The Swiss OSCE Chairmanship will vigorously pursue its efforts to promote security and stability in Ukraine.