

Remarks With Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko At a Joint Press Availability

 www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2017/07/272446.htm

PRESIDENT POROSHENKO: (Via interpreter) Dear Mr. Secretary of State, dear members of the delegations, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I would like to welcome Mr. Rex Tillerson today here in Ukraine. Your arrival, dear Mr. Secretary of State, is a follow-up of those arrangements that we reached in Washington during my meeting with the President of the United States, the Vice President, and many top-rank officials of the new administrations, where we received a clear message in support of Ukraine – support of its sovereignty, territorial integrity, of our independence; support of our reforms. And we really appreciate that today the support is practically implemented as you're coming to Ukraine.

I'm pleased to note that since our first contact at the highest level, we quickly come to the practical work in a clear-cut, coordinated, and pragmatic manner. And dear Mr. Secretary of State, I'm grateful to you for this support and for these very efficient negotiations that we had in Washington and that we have had today in Kyiv. I also appreciate the symbolic and timely visit today in Kyiv.

Immediately after negotiations in Hamburg and G20 summit, today we are kept very much updated in detail what happened. We coordinated our further steps, and we are confident that the first meeting of the presidents of the United States and Russia, where the situation in Donbas was also talked about, and what to do with the Russian behavior on non-observation of the Minsk agreements and non-implementation of the clear and understandable steps to de-occupy Ukraine and bringing peace back into the Ukrainian soil.

I am very much pleased, Mr. Secretary of State, that your team is getting bigger, and I would like to extend my gratitude for appointing Kurt as a special envoy for coordinating and for cooperation on the Ukrainian issue. Ukraine knows very well him, despite his first visit to Ukraine, and I really appreciate that immediately after appointment, virtually in a couple of hours, Kurt Volker joined the delegation. And we welcome him very much, and thank you for this decision that he will stay here with us together so that we would not delay the issue, but from the very first hours of his appointment became very well-coordinated and efficient cooperation.

Kurt, I rely on your rich experience coupled with your decisiveness will speed up the negotiation process and will coordinate our actions that will allow us to count on the full implementation of the Minsk agreements by the Russian Federation. We view today's visit as a powerful signal of support of Ukraine for our joint fight for democratic values, for freedom, for democracy. And we are confident that Russia must demonstrate its goodwill to the peaceful settlement in Donbas and will stop killings, will stop the war, will stop hybrid attacks not only in the east of our country, not only in the Crimea, but would improve the situation with cyber crime and propaganda and other trade and economic wars, which is a part of the Russian hybrid war. Because unfortunately, Mr. Secretary of State, I have to say that we have not experienced yet the changes in the Russian behavior.

I really appreciate to talking detail with the Secretary of State about the current situation in Donbas, about the situation with the limitation, unfortunately, of the efficient functioning of the special monitoring mission of the OSCE. You may well know that recently the representative of the United States of America died in the occupied territory. He was murdered by the members of the pro-Russia warlords. I decided to award him with the high Ukrainian award to mark that important and noble mission fulfilled by the OSCE to ensure the true information for the whole world so that the world could have the actual information about the events and developments of Russia in the occupied territory.

If Moscow does not want to waste the chance, I am confident that it should join the logics observed by all the members of the Normandy format: first, the stable, reliable, and lasting ceasefire; second, the withdrawal of all occupational troops from the Ukrainian soil; third, stop intimidating international observers and to count on the OSCE that they will be frightened and will leave Ukraine, these dangerous precedents and we will not allow that to happen again; fourth, this is to ensure the reliable control of the uncontrolled border between Ukraine and

Russia and the confrontation line to ensure the lasting ceasefire and peace; and fifth, from the security component is the release of all hostages illegally taken in the occupied territory as well as in Russian presence. And we are confident that the fulfillment of these – and I underscore these minimum requirements on security – would enable the peaceful process which wants the only thing – the political will of Moscow.

Time and again, I underscore Kyiv did not plan, did not start this war. Ukrainian troops are not present in the Russian territory. We did not plan the war. We did not start it. It was planned and started in Moscow. That's why the keys to peaceful settlement are in Moscow. We want to clearly state that we are determined to peaceful process, and most than anything else we strive for peace. We clearly observe all obligations undertaken under Minsk agreements, and we count on the support of our partners in the United States of America in the Normandy format, and we rely on the sober understanding of the situation in Russia. And this is one of the key and overriding components of our today meetings that we have agreed on the cooperation and algorithm of our intention to move forward along the route of the Minsk process.

I would like to state that today on the agenda we touched upon the item of Crimea. And I am pleased to say that our American partners and Mr. Secretary of State assured that Crimea is high on the agenda, and territorial integrity and stopping of the illegal annexation of the Crimea is a clear condition to lift sanctions from Russia.

We also talked in detail about the sanctions, and we were assured that until all conditions of the Minsk agreements are fulfilled and Ukrainian territory is liberated, there is no talking about lifting sanctions. Though I assured and my point of view fully coincides with Mr. Secretary of State's position that there is hardly any person that would be more interested to lift sanctions than Ukrainian president, because sanctions are connected to peace and liberation of the Ukrainian territory, and I am striving this more than anything else.

I would like to touch upon separately support of reforms that the United States are given, and I was pleased to hear the support of reforms in energy sector after today's meeting in the morning, after today's talks, and the support of our bilateral relations. They are focused on economic sector and on the purchase of the American coal and the construction on nuclear waste plant processing as well as nuclear fuel for Ukrainian Energoatom company, and bringing investors in the oil and gas sector. I would like to say thank you especially for cooperation in energy sector, especially in preventing the realization of political project of Northern Stream 2, and I appreciate the clear and efficient position in preventing the implementation of this highly politicized project.

We have agreed on enlarging the contacts between Ukrainian Government, Ukrainian authorities, and the U.S. administration, and we are looking forward to the visits in August of the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Energy of the United States, as well as other top-rank officials of the American administration.

And I would like to say that as a result of our highly developing cooperation, it is confirmed by the fact that Ukraine is having not only powerful bipartisan support in the U.S. Congress, but mighty support in the White House, in the Department of State, and the American administration. I really appreciate Rex for this powerful support, and I am glad to welcome you most warmly to Ukraine. And I hope that our today's visit will facilitate the extension of our cooperation in many sectors, starting from the defense; security; cyber crime prevention, where we have reached important arrangements; economic; energy; and cultural, as well as many other sectors.

Thank you, dear Mr. Secretary of State, and I invite you to take the floor.

MODERATOR: A statement by the United States Secretary of State.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, first, thank you, President Poroshenko, for this very warm welcome to myself and my delegation that's traveling with me to Kyiv. This is an important stop for me at this time in particular, as you've acknowledged recently appointed Ambassador Kurt Volker as the special representative on Ukraine, and I appreciate the accommodation you have made that will allow him to spend the next couple of days here becoming much more deeply familiar with the perspective of yourself and other members of your government and the Ukrainian people regarding this very challenging issue. Ambassador Volker is a very capable, well-known diplomat, and I appreciate Ambassador Volker taking this role on for us as well.

I think it is important to be very clear on what our goals are, the United States' goals are, with respect to the

situation here. And first and foremost, it is to restore Ukraine's territorial sovereignty and integrity. The United States has already contributed more than \$600 million since the beginning of this crisis. We also think it's very important that we seek the safety and the security of all Ukrainian citizens regardless of their ethnicity, their nationality, or their religion. This is a fundamental element to Ukraine's sovereignty as well and the protection of all Ukrainian citizens.

I think as long as the parties commit themselves to these goals, I am confident that we can make progress. I've been very clear in my discussions with Russian leadership on more than one occasion that it is necessary for Russia to take the first steps to de-escalate the situation in the east part of Ukraine, in particular by respecting the ceasefire, by pulling back the heavy weapons, and allowing the OSCE observers to carry out their responsibilities. This is necessary for us to make any movement in particular.

We are disappointed by the lack of progress under the Minsk agreement, and that is why we are appointing a special representative to put additional emphasis. We will be coordinating carefully with the Normandy members as well along with yourself and with the Russian Federation Government to see if we cannot make progress and make progress in a more prompt fashion as well. We do call on Russia to honor its commitments that were made under the Minsk accords and to exercise influence over the separatists in the region whom they do hold complete control over, and we call on them, again, to immediately call on their proxies to cease the violence that is ongoing in east Ukraine. Again, we call on them to allow the monitors full access to all areas to perform their mission not only along the line of contact but ultimately along the border itself.

The U.S. and EU sanctions on Russia will remain in place until Moscow reverses the actions that triggered these particular sanctions.

During our discussions today, we also had very useful exchanges on economic reforms. And I want to recognize tremendous progress that has been made by the Ukrainian Government in reforms over the past three years now, and it's evident in the economic performance as well, which I find quite encouraging. I know that there is more to do, and I know that you are committed to continuing these reforms to strengthen Ukrainian security but also economic performance as well.

I know that Ukraine is committed to implementing the obligations to the IMF, including pension reform, land reform, privatization of state-owned enterprises, and improving corporate governance. And we spoke extensively about the steps necessary to make Ukraine a very attractive destination for foreign direct investment, and I know you're committed to improving that situation.

We also discussed the importance of implementing the anti-corruption reforms, because that too is an important element of attracting foreign direct investment and more business activity, which will create more jobs for Ukrainian citizens and grow the economy. This includes the important work Ukraine is doing to reform the justice sector. Ukraine's commitment to selecting supreme court justices of the highest integrity and professionalism, and creating the anti-corruption court. These are essential first steps in reforming the judiciary, and has all too often not been progressed. And I know and you expressed your very sincere commitment to progressing the actual creation of the court and the appointment of judges with the highest integrity.

We know there are challenges to moving these reforms forward, but they are critical to the success of Ukraine for the future and really creating the circumstances for Ukraine to maintain as a viable economy standing on its own, an important partner to its European neighbors but an important country for the rest of the world as well. I am quite encouraged by the situation that I see here in Ukraine, the progress that's been made. And I know that with these reforms, once they are in place, Ukraine will be a very attractive place for business investment elsewhere.

I do want to note that this marks the 25th year of diplomatic relations between the United States of America and an independent and sovereign Ukraine. America is very proud of the ties that we have and the profound friendship that has developed. And Mr. President, let me say personally I'm very proud of the friendship we've developed through our multiple telephone contacts, our meeting in Washington, D.C. when President Trump hosted you at the White House, and this very warm welcome you've extended to me today.

We have a lot of difficult work ahead of us, but I know we're committed to the same goals.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Now we have questions from both sides. First from Ukrainian side, Olha Paraschuk, 112 TV channel.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) Good afternoon, (inaudible). (Inaudible) channel. Meanwhile, the negotiating in Normandy format will resume, and what role the United States will play in resuming the world and peace in Donbas? And I will ask the question to the Secretary of State: What role do you believe the United States will play in resuming the peace in Ukraine?

PRESIDENT POROSHENKO: (Via interpreter) Thank you very much for this question. As I have said before, after the meeting and my telephone talks in Berlin and in Paris and the meeting in Hamburg, we have reached the agreement that most likely in July the Normandy format phone conversation will take place, and we do not exclude that after this telephone call we will be able to organize the summit.

It's still undecided where it will take place, but we are hopeful for decisive and speedy, practical, concrete talk in the phone conversation as well as during the summit this very summer. Ukraine is not interested in delaying these negotiations, because every day Ukraine is paying very high price. As wounded and killed Ukrainian heroes, we are paying very high price by wounded and killed civilian population, and every day this is unacceptable for our country.

And we are very much hopeful that after the summit we will be able to ensure the implementation of the security component of the Minsk agreement. And during the press conference I said what we mean, and we are very much satisfied and count on the active role of our partners from the United States, and we are getting support of the Minsk process, and we are – coordinated our actions in the framework of the Minsk agreements. And we welcome the role of the United States in ensuring and support of Ukraine in restoring our sovereignty, territorial integrity, our independence.

I would like to stress that we rely on the agreements between Ukraine and the United States in the framework of the Budapest memorandum, and I am confident that we will be able to count on the support of our American partners.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, I think President Trump has made it quite clear that making progress and ultimately solving the crisis here in Ukraine and restoring the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Ukraine is required in order for the U.S. and Russia to improve its relationships between the two of our countries. This is an issue that's of great importance to the American people. They take a great deal of interest in it. And the President has made this clear in our communications with our Russian counterparts.

This is indicative of the appointment of – again, of Ambassador Volker for a more direct engagement with the Normandy group. We are going to be exploring ways to change the status quo, because continuing to leave things the way they are is simply not acceptable. So we have to reinvigorate these talks to move them forward, and that is the purpose of our engagement and the purpose of Ambassador Volker's appointment. So we're hopeful that we can change this dynamic and begin to make progress.

MODERATOR: And a question to Associated Press.

QUESTION: Hello and thank you. Mr. Secretary, a couple of things coming out of the meeting from Friday between President Trump, President Putin, Foreign Minister Lavrov, and yourself. There seems to be conflicting stories about whether or not President Trump agreed or accepted President Putin's denial of any kind of meddling, cyber-meddling in the 2016 election. Can you clear that up? Did he accept President Putin's explanation or not?

And then secondly, one of the main things that you guys achieved or came out of as an accomplishment from the meeting was a joint U.S.-Russia study on cyber – using cyber to affect elections and sabotage infrastructure. Do you think that this joint study should begin with a study of who was responsible for the three attacks over the past couple of years here in Ukraine? Do you believe Russia had a – played a role in those?

And President Poroshenko, I'd like to hear your thoughts on that as well. Thank you.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: With respect to the discussion that President Trump had with President Putin around the interference in the U.S. elections 2016, and I think as I indicated in statements I made the other evening, this was the first topic for discussion. President Trump raised it directly with President Putin.

I think, in all candidness, we did not expect an answer other than the one we received, and so I think that, you know, that was about the way we expected the conversation to go. I think the point was made that this is an issue that is – really has the American people quite concerned. And again, it too stands as an obstacle to our ability to improve the relationship between the United States and Russia, and it needs to be addressed in terms of how we assure the American people that interference in our elections will not occur by Russia or anyone else.

And so what was announced was, first, we're going to have a dialogue around how do we gain such assurances. You know, the past – I don't know that we will ever come to an agreement, obviously, with our Russian counterparts on that. I think the important thing is how do we assure this doesn't happen again.

What we agreed on the cyber front is to explore a framework under which we might begin to have agreement of how to deal with these very complex issues of cyber threats, cyber security, cyber intrusions. And this is a challenge, obviously, for us globally, so Russia is not the only nation that we're going to have to begin to develop some way of how we as an international community are going to deal with what has emerged as an ever more complex issue. And I think the election interference really shows how complicated the use of these types of tools are becoming. We have to find a way to begin to address that, and it's not going to be only about Russia. It's going to be about an international engagement as well.

MODERATOR: Okay. Thank you very much. The press conference is concluded. Thank you for your attention.