



21 March 2014. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will today travel to the Ukraine after a one day visit to Russia.

In Moscow the Secretary-General met today with Russian President Vladimir Putin and emphasized the need for de-escalating tensions between Russia and Ukraine, and restoring the “brotherly relationship” between the two countries.

“It is clear that we are at a crossroads. I will continue to fulfil my duty as Secretary-General of the United Nations and engage with all relevant parties. We must employ every possible diplomatic tool at our disposal to solve this crisis, which has grave political and economic ramifications,” stressed Mr. Ban, in a statement to the press in Moscow.

Following a “very productive and constructive meeting” with President Putin, Mr. Ban highlighted Russia’s crucial position in the international scene. “As a permanent member of the Security Council, Russia is critical to the maintenance of international peace and security – nowhere more so than in this region,” he said.

The UN chief added that “President Putin has been one of the most important partners to the United Nations and he has been an international leader who has repeatedly called for international disputes to be solved within the framework of the United Nations Charter.”

During his meeting, Mr. Ban called on all parties to “refrain from any hasty or provocative actions that could further exacerbate an already very tense and very volatile situation. Inflammatory rhetoric can lead to further tensions and possible miscalculations, as well as dangerous counter-reactions.”

Expressing his “profound concern” regarding “the recent incident where Ukrainian military bases were taken over,” the Secretary-General insisted that “it is at moments like this in history that a small incident can quickly lead to a situation spiralling out of anyone’s control,” and stressed that “an honest and constructive dialogue between Kyiv and Moscow is essential.”

“I told President Putin that I understand his legitimate concerns related to the situation of the Russian minority in Ukraine. I have said from the beginning of this crisis that it is critical that the human rights of all people in Ukraine, especially minorities, must be respected and protected,” Mr. Ban stressed, applauding the recent commitment by Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk to reinstate Russian as an official language in Ukraine along with other positive measures.

*Photo: UN-Eskinder Debebe.*