



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°966
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EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Madam Chair, at the first discussion at the Forum this year, let us reiterate our principled condemnation of Russia's illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and the continuous acts of aggression in eastern Ukraine. We will continue to draw attention to this blatant breach of international law and of the OSCE principles and commitments which are fundamental to the European security order as long as the situation is not reversed.

Madame Chair, last year brought one step forward in relation to the resolution of the conflict, namely the July re-commitment to the ceasefire and agreement on additional measures which allowed to substantially reduce ceasefire violations and the resulting casualties, in particular among the civilian population. Unfortunately, it did not translate into tangible progress across the board, despite the political will and readiness shown by Ukraine. The updated de-mining plan is still on hold, although casualties from mines and explosive devices have not stopped. Planned new disengagement areas have not been implemented either. The two new EECPs in Zolote and Shchastia were opened by the Ukrainian government but the traffic is blocked by the other side. The SMM continued to record weapons in violation of withdrawal lines, overwhelmingly in non-government controlled areas.

The recent trend of rising ceasefire violations is also highly worrying, in particular recent escalations north of Mariupol. This poses a real danger to the population in the conflict zone, as we have seen from the rising number of casualties and fatalities,

also among Ukrainian servicemen, and damages to civilian property and infrastructure.

We reiterate our strong support for the Minsk agreements and the efforts of both the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group to find a peaceful resolution of the conflict, in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We call on Russia, as party to both of these formats, to show a constructive approach in these negotiations and in the implementation of all the respective provisions it committed to. We are convinced that with political will, progress can be achieved.

We highly value the work of the Special Monitoring Mission, in particular under the current circumstances impacted by the pandemic. We recall our position that the SMM should have full access to the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, including Crimea. All impediments to the SMM's work, most of which occur in the non-government controlled areas, including attempts to destroy SMM's assets, should cease. Only last Wednesday, the SMM reported that its UAVs had been targeted five times within one week, which is absolutely unacceptable. We urge the Russian Federation to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to ensure that all undue restrictions on the SMM are removed. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets, should be held accountable, both politically and financially. Transparency, including at the areas near the Ukrainian-Russian State border currently not under control by the Ukrainian government, is of key importance.

In conclusion, we remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full in order to achieve a sustainable political solution to the conflict in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and once again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to meet these commitments in full. We reiterate our deep concern about the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia in the conflict zone. We call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the armed formations. The ceasefire must be respected. All Minsk-regulated weapons must be withdrawn.

All foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries must be removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential.

We recall our unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders and call upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to recognise these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilising the situation and reversing moves that contravene these principles. We strongly condemn the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces since February 2014 and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, which we will not recognise. We continue to call on Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage to and from the Sea of Azov in accordance with international law. We express our deep concern about the ongoing large-scale militarisation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia, which continues to impact the security situation in the Black Sea region and beyond.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.