



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°988 Vienna, 13 October 2021

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chair, the European Union and its Member States regret the heavy toll the conflict resulting from Russia's continuous acts of aggression against Ukraine continues to take on the civilian population in the conflict zone. As it was underlined in last week's report to the Permanent Council by Chief Monitor Ambassador Çevik, that so far in 2021 the SMM has confirmed 72 civilian casualties, including 15 fatalities, with August and September being the most tragic months in this regard. It is no secret that it is correlated with the general negative trend, observed since the beginning of the year, of rising ceasefire violations and the increased use of Minsk-proscribed weapons, the overwhelming majority of which (77%) were observed in the areas held by the Russia-backed armed formations. In this context, we underline once again the importance of a functioning coordination and verification mechanism. The return of the Russian officers to the Joint Control and Coordination Commission would be a welcome step forward in this direction.

Chief Monitor Çevik characterised, in his latest report, the ongoing restrictions on the SMM monitoring as "chronic". We fully share his frustration and recall that 90% of these restrictions are reported in the non-government controlled areas. We therefore urge Russia to use its considerable and undeniable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to make sure that all restrictions on the SMM are removed. The SMM must have, in accordance with its mandate, full and unhindered access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea.

The SMM remains a crucial element of much needed transparency, in particular over the areas held by the Russia-backed armed formations and along the uncontrolled

segment of the Ukraine-Russia State border. The unfortunate and regrettable decision by the Russian Federation which resulted in the closure of the Border Observer Mission at the end of September highlights the need for additional efforts in this regard. We applaud the start of the long-range UAVs test flights from a new launching site further from the contact line and hope that this will enable the resumption of their use at full capacity as soon as possible. We note that, as confirmed by Amb. Çevik in PC last week, at least take-offs and landings of the long-range UAVs appear safer now. Still, the presence of modern, Russian made, jamming equipment, as for example the target and acquisition radar Kasta-2E1 spotted by the SMM again on 23 September, in the areas held by the Russia-backed armed formations in Donetsk region, is highly worrying. This underscores once again the importance of ensuring the effective monitoring of the movements of such equipment across the uncontrolled segment of the Ukraine-Russia State border in accordance with the Minsk agreements.

We fully support continued international diplomatic efforts within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group, which are aimed at reaching a political solution to the conflict in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We call on both sides to implement the Minsk agreements in their entirety and underscore Russia's responsibility, as a party to the conflict, in this regard.

Mr. Chair, we continue to follow closely the worrying developments on the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula which is part of Ukraine. Therefore, we strongly condemn the recent announcement of yet another conscription of residents of the peninsula to the Russian Federation Armed Forces. This is a violation of international humanitarian law, which Russia is bound by.

Mr. Chair, 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 the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, and ALBANIA* and 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.

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