



## EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°918**

**Vienna, 19 June 2019**

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### **EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine**

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The EU and its Member States are deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation in the areas of conflict, which is a consequence of acts of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Civilians living in the vicinity of the contact line continue to suffer from the ongoing armed violence and the presence of mines and heavy weapons. We are deeply saddened by reports about civilian casualties. We condemn the shelling of residential houses and civilian infrastructure further aggravating the dire humanitarian situation in the conflict zone. We deplore the laying of new mines as reported by the SMM, including in residential areas, despite the prohibition against the laying of new mines and the obligation to remove all those previously laid. We therefore reiterate our call on all sides to disengage, to withdraw heavy weapons and to step up efforts on demining in order to attain a sustainable political solution to the conflict in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We appreciate the TCG participants' re-commitment to begin disengagement in the area near Stanytsia Luhanska expressed at the TCG meeting of 5 June. Although it was not possible to begin the disengagement process on 10 June, we call on the participants to fully respect their commitments. We call on the Russian Federation to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to this end.

Mr. Chairman, we deplore the ongoing impediments to the SMM's work, which continued to occur predominantly in areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations. We are deeply concerned in particular about the systematic restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement by Russia-backed armed formations in areas of southern Donetsk, including Zaichenko, Verkhnoшыrokyvske, Shevchenko and Novoazovsk. We deplore the incident of 9

June near non-government controlled Molodizhne, putting the lives of our monitors at risk when small arms fire occurred near an SMM patrol and bullets flew over their heads. This is unacceptable.

We condemn the continued targeting and jamming of the SMM's technical assets. Such restrictions hinder the Mission's ability to monitor the situation on the ground, pose a threat to its assets and put at risk the safety of its monitors. In the period of 3-9 June the SMM UAVs experienced signal interference due to possible jamming on both sides of the contact line on 15 occasions. We are concerned over the SMM observation of electronic countermeasure/electronic warfare systems near non-government-controlled Yenakieve and, a surveillance radar system near non-government-controlled Pervomaisk. We repeat that those responsible for any willful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

Our position on the unjustified use of force by Russia at the Kerch Strait on 25 November 2018 and its negative impact in the Azov Sea and Russia's violations of international law is well known. We strongly call on Russia to immediately release all the crew members and return their vessels unconditionally and without delay, which is also in accordance with the binding order of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea delivered on 25 May. We expect Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage through the Kerch Strait to and from the Azov Sea, in accordance with international law.

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 regarding information 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 express our deep concern about the ongoing large-scale militarisation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia, which continues to impact negatively 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 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.