



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°919
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EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

The EU and its Member States welcome the steps taken towards disengagement of forces and hardware in Stanytsia Luhanska, as observed and documented by the SMM. We call on all sides to take all necessary steps for the successful completion of the process and to ensure its long term sustainability. We urge the Russian Federation to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to this end. We are grateful to the SMM for its active involvement in facilitating the disengagement process, as well as its monitoring and verification and the thorough reporting, which we closely follow. We encourage further progress to be made towards improving the conditions for civilians crossing the line of contact, such as urgently rebuilding the bridge at Stanytsia Luhanska and opening of new crossing points. We share Ambassador Sajdik's hope that the successful implementation of the disengagement process in Stanytsia Luhanska will serve as a catalyst for further steps towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict, starting with a sustainable and permanent ceasefire.

Mr. Chairman, we remain concerned about the volatile security situation in the areas of conflict, which is a consequence of acts of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. We are deeply saddened by reports about civilian casualties from shelling and mine explosions on both of the contact line. We condemn the shelling of residential houses and civilian infrastructure as well as placing of military hardware close to residential areas, putting civilians further at risk. In this context, we are closely following the TCG discussions on the 'harvest ceasefire' and call on all sides to display necessary political will to reach an agreement on the ceasefire recommitment and to respect it fully.

Mr. Chairman, any impediments to the SMM's work are simply unacceptable. We deplore the ongoing restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement, 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, and the systematic denial of access to areas in the vicinity of the uncontrolled Ukraine-Russia state border. We condemn the continued targeting and jamming of the SMM's technical assets, which continued on both sides of the contact line. 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. Jamming of SMM LR UAVs is particularly worrying as they proved to be essential in monitoring areas which cannot be accessed by SMM patrols due to restrictions or lack of security. We deplore the loss of a new Long Range UAV in non-government controlled area last week due to unknown causes. We are deeply concerned about the military trucks spotted by the SMM LR UAVs traveling back and forth between the main railway station near non-government-controlled Sukhodilsk, eastwards to the border with the Russian Federation, as well as westwards towards non-government-controlled Molodhvardiisk. Such reports do little to allay concerns over supplies of Russian military equipment to the areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations.

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.