



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°960
Vienna, 11 November 2020**

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Madame Chair, the European Union and its Member States consider the continuing relative calm in the conflict zone a highly positive development. We reiterate our call on the sides to fully respect the ceasefire and refrain from actions that would jeopardise it, including extensions to the existing or digging new trenches. We strongly condemn the incidents in the recent weeks which saw casualties and even fatalities among Ukrainian military personnel. We call on Russia to use its considerable and undeniable influence over the armed formations it backs to stop such provocations.

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. The improvement of the security situation in eastern Ukraine should be used to give impetus for swift further progress, in particular within the TCG. We call on Russia to match the constructive approach shown by Ukraine in the TCG.

We repeat our call for further progress with regard to the disengagement areas and de-mining. The delays, particularly in de-mining, risk to render impossible any meaningful activities before the onset of winter, which would be highly regrettable.

We also call for the de-blocking at the TCG of the exchange of detainees based on the principle "all for all". It is essential that the ICRC be finally granted access

to the detainees also in the non-government controlled areas. We underline that this is one of the many commitments of the Normandy Four Summit in December that still awaits implementation. In this context, we welcome the visit to Ukraine last week of ICRC President Peter Maurer and hope that this initiative will not only contribute to further progress on the exchange of detainees but will also help improve the access to non-government-controlled areas of humanitarian aid, delivered in accordance with international law.

Madame Chair, the SMM remains our source of reliable information on the situation on the ground and we highly value its regular and thematic reports. Sadly, its thematic report issued two days ago on “Civilian casualties in the conflict related regions in eastern Ukraine”, informs about a tragic figure of nearly 950 civilian casualties since 2017, including 100 children. On the other hand, it highlights positive effects of the recent ceasefire. It also confirms what we and many others around this table have been saying for long about the urgent need of de-mining, as mines, UXO and other explosive devices have now become the biggest source of injuries and fatalities among the civilian population.

The second thematic report, released yesterday, on the “Restrictions to the SMM’s Freedom of Movement” also paints a well-known, but by no means less alarming picture. The report shows that since the Covid-19 outbreak, the Mission has been facing “unprecedented” and “systematic” denials of access at checkpoints of the armed formations and has been barred from crossing between non-government-controlled areas, having to operate *de facto* as three separate and isolated units. In the reporting period, over 96 percent of the total restrictions on its freedom of movement occurred in non-government-controlled areas. This is simply unacceptable: the SMM must have, in accordance with its mandate, unhindered access to the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, including Crimea. We urge Russia to use its considerable and undeniable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to remove all restrictions on the SMM.

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.