



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chair, the European Union and its Member States regret that the security situation in the conflict zone is becoming increasingly volatile. The Special Monitoring Mission reported an average of 273 ceasefire violations per day during the first two weeks of September 2021, an increase of about 30% compared to the month of August. This deteriorating trend is alarming, in particular as it is accompanied by an increased use of Minsk-proscribed heavy weapons and continuous obstruction of SMM UAVs. As a consequence, the human toll of the conflict both among the civilian population and military personnel keeps rising. We recall that ensuring a stable security situation on the ground is critical for further steps in the settlement of this conflict.

Our position remains unambiguous. We decisively reject Russian attempts to portray itself as a mediator in an “internal Ukrainian conflict”. Finding a sustainable solution to the conflict requires frank and honest discussion, as well as political will on both sides to implement the respective commitments. We therefore urge Russia, as a party to the conflict, to take responsibility for its actions and to constructively engage in the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

We reaffirm our strong support to the SMM which must have safe, secure, unconditional and unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine. This includes the illegally annexed Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and along the whole Ukraine-Russia State border. Unfortunately, this is not the case. According to last week’s report, the SMM faced 12 instances of such violations, all but one in the areas held by the Russia-backed armed formations. Moreover, COVID-19 is still being used by these armed formations as a pretext for continuous restrictions despite the fact that the SMM

has introduced numerous precautionary measures including vaccination of its staff. As mentioned by the SMM leadership in every recent formal or informal briefing, such restrictions are a serious violation of the mandate agreed by all pS; they severely hamper Mission's operations and effectively divide the Mission into three separate parts. Regrettably, Russia has not yet used its undeniable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to re-establish the SMM's freedom of movement.

The situation concerning SMM UAVs continues to be of high concern. Last week, the Mission reported five instances of targeting mini-UAVs by small-arms fire. Moreover, long-range UAV flights remain suspended since the end of June. We hope that the decision by the SMM to move the launching site further westward, away from the contact line, and hence the sources of jamming, will allow for a safe resumption of long-range UAV flights by the end of this month. We recall that any impediments to the SMM's work, including attempts to destroy the SMM's assets, are unacceptable. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

Transparency over the parts of the Ukraine-Russia State border that are temporarily not under the control of the Ukrainian government is essential, particularly after the regrettable refusal by the Russian Federation to extend the mandate of the Border Observer Mission at Gukovo and Donetsk, which has provided pS with useful, although limited information on the movements at those two crossing points. Long-range UAVs, as we know from experience, are also a precious source of information on what is really happening at that border and we support their much wider use. Moreover, we consider it necessary for the Mission to increase its footprint closer to the uncontrolled border and hence we fully support the long-standing plans of the SMM to open new forward patrol bases in those areas.

The SMM remains our valued source of reliable information on the situation on the ground. Today, we wish to welcome SMM's latest thematic report on the gender dimensions of SMM monitoring. The report focuses on women's experiences of the conflict and underlines women's contributions, including as part of civil society organisations, to peace dialogue efforts. This is an important topic that should remain on SMM's and our radar.

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 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.