



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°987 Vienna, 29 September 2021

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chair, the European Union and its Member States remain seriously concerned by the volatile security situation in the conflict zone. We are particularly concerned about the situation in and around the Petrivske and Zolote disengagement areas and the Donetsk Filtration Station, including when the DFS workers' buses are in transit. Ceasefire violations occur with a varying intensity, causing human suffering and damage to civilian infrastructure. They must cease immediately. In addition, the SMM continues to observe weapons in violation of withdrawal lines, with 24 multiple launch rocket systems and nine pieces of artillery being recorded in the last reporting period in the areas held by the Russia backed-armed formations and two mortars on the government controlled side. These numbers speak for themselves. We repeat that the ceasefire can be best preserved if commitments made in the TCG, including the additional measures agreed in July 2020 are adhered to by both sides.

We reiterate our full support for the work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission. The Mission must have full freedom of movement within the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea and along the whole Ukraine-Russia State border. All impediments to the SMM's work, the overwhelming majority of which occur in the non-government controlled areas, are unacceptable. They violate the Mission's mandate agreed by all participating States.

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. Even more so, after the Russian

Federation has effectively vetoed a further extension of the Border Observer Mission at the Russian checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk, the Mission will stop its operational activities tomorrow. Using this occasion, we wish to reiterate our gratitude to Amb. Varga and his team for their dedicated work under so challenging circumstances. We expect the SMM to increase its footprint in the areas close to the uncontrolled segment of the border, including through the establishment of additional Forward Patrol Bases and the wider use of the long-range UAV flights. The new launching site will hopefully contribute to a safer operational environment.

We decisively reject the Russian narrative of portraying itself as a mediator in an “internal Ukrainian conflict”, thus obstructing meaningful discussions in the TCG as well as in the Normandy format. The Minsk Protocol is unambiguous in stating that the TCG consists of representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE, the latter as the mediator. In this respect, Russia’s attempts to legitimize the so-called “people’s republics” in eastern Ukraine are not constructive. Finding a sustainable solution to the conflict requires frank and honest discussion on its nature, as well as political will to implement the respective commitments. We therefore urge Russia, as a party to the conflict, to take responsibility for its actions and to engage in the implementation of the Minsk agreements. A good start would be the full respect of the ceasefire, withdrawal of heavy weapons and providing full access to the SMM in accordance with its mandate.

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.