



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°923 Vienna, 11 September 2019**

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#### **EU Statement in response to Mr. Martin Povejšil, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Security and Multilateral Issues, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic**

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The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome H.E. Mr. Martin Povejšil, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic for Security and Multilateral Issues, to the Forum for Security Co-operation and thank him for outlining the priorities of the Czech FSC Chairmanship, as well as for presenting views of his country on the current security challenges in the OSCE area.

We would also like to use the opportunity to once again thank the Tajik FSC Chairmanship for its able leadership during the last trimester and to welcome Turkey as a new Troika member.

The Czech Republic assumes the FSC Chairmanship at a time when we continue to be confronted with a blatant violation of international law and basic OSCE principles by the Russian Federation following its illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol and destabilizing actions in eastern Ukraine. We once again urge all sides to comply with the commitments they have signed up to, as a sustainable political solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine can only be reached through full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Mr. Chairman, we welcome the exchange that took place over the weekend between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. This means that finally Oleg Sentsov, Roman Suschenko, Pavlo Hryb, Edem Bekirov, Volodymyr Balukh, the 24 captured Ukrainian sailors, and others whose release the European Union has called for so many times, are free and reunited with their families. We wish them a prompt recovery from their imprisonment and we call on Russia to immediately release all

other Ukrainians who remain unjustly imprisoned. Their release is testimony to the work and determination of all those, including civil society, activists, legal experts, who have worked tirelessly for this outcome. We hope that the prisoner exchange builds momentum for progress towards the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. At the same time, we underline the importance of full cooperation by all States with efforts to establish accountability for the downing of flight MH17.

Our position on the unjustified use of force by Russia near the Kerch Strait on 25 November 2018, its negative impact in the Black and Azov seas and Russia's violations of international law remains the same and we call on Russia to return to Ukraine's custody the vessels seized in the Black Sea on 25 November last year. We further call on Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage to and from the Sea of Azov, in accordance with international law.

The EU welcomes an overall improvement of the security situation in both Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the last weeks, including a significant drop in the number of ceasefire violations compared to the period before the ceasefire took effect. However we are concerned about the volatile security situation in conflict areas, which has still potential to deteriorate quickly and has already seen local escalations.

The EU and its Member States highly appreciate the work of the SMM and attach great importance to the safety and security of the Mission and its personnel. We are very concerned with the two recent incidents in Pikuzy on 1 and 4 September when SMM patrols were exposed to explosions only 30m from their position and small arms fire less than 200m from their position. The SMM 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 Ukraine-Russia state border to which the SMM is systematically denied access by Russia-backed formations.

The European Union does not recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation, and continues to condemn this violation of international law. Therefore, the European Union does not recognise the holding of

elections in the Crimean peninsula. Anybody elected in the Crimean peninsula claiming to "represent" the populations of Crimea and Sevastopol will not be recognised as representatives of those territories, which are Ukrainian.

Mr. Chairman, we appreciate the choice of topics for your FSC Chairmanship. We welcome the continuation of the discussion on regional security and defence cooperation issues at the example of the Visegrad countries. We are also pleased to have the possibility to debate the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda and look forward to exchanging views and sharing best practices on ensuring women's full and effective participation in conflict prevention, peace processes, relief and recovery, and protection from sexual and gender based violence.

We look forward to discussing non-proliferation issues and the implementation of the UNSCR 1540. The EU and its Member States attach great importance to enhancing peace and security in the OSCE area by reducing the threat posed by the illicit trafficking and excessive accumulation of SALW and conventional ammunition. This is demonstrated inter alia through support and contribution to the OSCE's assistance projects.

As a staunch supporter of the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, we also welcome the fact that this topic features on your agenda. We look forward to celebrating 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Code of Conduct and we thank Hungary and the Conflict Prevention Centre for organizing a dedicated Symposium in Budapest in October.

We reiterate our strong commitment to full implementation in letter and spirit of the existing commitments in the politico-military dimension, which is essential for enhancing military transparency and political stability in the OSCE area. We remain strong supporters of Vienna Document modernisation and we welcome proposals on various Vienna Document chapters aimed at strengthening its provisions and adapting it to the current security environment. We encourage all pS to re-engage on

Vienna Document modernisation. We look forward to continue our discussions on concrete VD+ proposals at the Working Group A.

We emphasize the need to work towards creating an environment conducive to reinvigorating Conventional Arms Control and CSBMs. We highly value the Structured Dialogue, which we are ready to develop further in accordance with the Hamburg Declaration, as a transparent, inclusive, state-owned and state-driven process, without a predetermined outcome and of high relevance for the European Union. The Structured Dialogue is a meaningful platform for in-depth exchanges on the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area and we actively support it. We commend the IWG SD Chair for convening discussions next week focussing on transparency, risk reduction and incident prevention and on better implementation of the existing principles and commitments in the politico-military dimension, including updating of our existing tools as well as on military aspects of "hybrid" threats. We fully support the Chair's proposal to devote the second day to expert level discussions on preventing and managing incidents and on national practices. We look forward to all participating States engaging constructively to these important discussions.

Mr. Chairman, we would like to use this opportunity to assure you of our support throughout your FSC Chairmanship. We look forward to working with you and wish you and your team every success.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\* and the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member 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.