



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE
AMBASSADORS GRAU AND ÇEVİK

Delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 8 July 2021

Madame Chair,

I would like to join others in thanking Ambassadors Çevik and Grau for their reports, and also for the valuable work they and their teams continue to carry out.

Norway regrets the slow progress in the Trilateral Contact Group and the working groups. This directly affects the civilian population on both sides of the contact line. We urge Russia to engage constructively in the TCG with a view to reaching agreement on the exchange of conflict-related detainees, demining and measures to reduce cease-fire violations.

Several of the crossing points on the line of contact are still closed, mainly on the non-government-controlled side. This increases the hardship for civilians. We call on Russia to use its influence on the armed formations it backs to ensure the opening of all crossing points. COVID-19 has exacerbated the situation on both sides. This must not be used as an excuse for disproportionate restrictions.

Russia has issued a large number of passports to Ukrainian citizens living in the non-government-controlled areas. We urge Russia to stop this practice, which undermines Ukraine's sovereignty and further complicates implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The SMM observers are increasingly denied access to certain areas, mostly by the armed formations. The observers are systematically denied access to parts of the non-government-controlled areas close to the state border between Ukraine and Russia. This reduces their ability to observe and report according to their mandate. The increased targeting of the SMM's cameras and UAVs is also undermining the mission, particularly in non-government-controlled areas. We again urge Russia to use its influence to ensure the SMM can operate unhindered.

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The SMM has done a lot to adjust its operations to the situation caused by COVID-19. We appreciate the measures taken to protect the health, safety and security of the staff. We are also grateful to the incoming Polish chairpersonship, who offered vaccines to the SMM.

Norway appreciates the efforts of the Swedish chairpersonship in keeping the conflict in and around Ukraine high on the OSCE's agenda and engaging with the parties to mitigate effects on the civilian population and take steps towards a resolution. The Chairperson-in-office visited Ukraine for the second time last month. We support her call for de-escalation and confidence-building in accordance with international law and OSCE principles and commitments.

We also appreciate that the OSCE's Secretary General has visited Ukraine to assure the parties of the full support of our organisation in working for a solution.

Before concluding, allow me to reiterate Norway's strong support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, including the Crimean Peninsula and the adjoining territorial waters.

As this is the last time Ambassador Grau will report to the Permanent Council in her current capacity, allow me to thank her for the excellent job she has done, and for the good cooperation we have enjoyed. We wish her all the best in her endeavours to come.

Thank you.