



STATEMENT IN REPLY TO THE BRIEFINGS GIVEN BY
AMBASSADORS SAJDIK AND APAKAN

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 27 September 2018

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Mr. Chair,

I would also like to thank Ambassadors Apakan and Sajdik for their reports to the Permanent Council, and to reiterate Norway's appreciation and support for their important work.

In the first week of September, Norway's Foreign Minister, Ms. Ine Eriksen Søreide, visited Ukraine. We are grateful to the SMM for its hospitality and assistance in this regard. The first hand impressions our Minister got during her visit to the crossing point at Pyshevyk, as well as the conversations she had with the people she met, add to the understanding from the regular reporting.

The situation for the civilian population remains dire. They face both hardship and threats to their security every day. All parties to the conflict have a responsibility to protect the civilian population from the dangers that arise from military operations.

Land mines constitute a particular threat for civilians, also in the long term. Not only do they kill and maim innocent civilians, they hamper resettlement and deny the population use of the land, also after a conflict has ended. Norway recalls the obligations under the Mine Ban Treaty and other instruments of International

Humanitarian Law. The Norwegian Foreign Minister raised this issue during her meetings in Kyiv. Norway wishes to reiterate the same message to the parties to the conflict here today. Norway repeats its call on the parties to comply with the SMM's request to share information about, and maps of, areas suspected to be contaminated with mines or other unexploded ordnance.

Sadly, the parties continue to show unwillingness to engage constructively in resolving the conflict. Agreed ceasefires are only partially and temporarily respected. Heavy weapons in violation of the agreements are frequently observed by SMM monitors. Once again, Norway calls on the parties to the conflict immediately to halt acts of aggression and implement their commitments under the Minsk agreements.

In this regard, we support the EU in asking Ukraine to ensure the extension of the special status law beyond its expiry date.

In the non-government controlled areas, monitors continue to face threats and intimidation which hamper their work. The UAVs continue to be targeted, to the detriment of the situational awareness of the SMM. Norway urges the parties to the conflict to ensure that the SMM's working conditions enable it to fulfil its mandate.

We recall that the SMM's mandate covers all Ukrainian territory, including the Crimean peninsula. Norway reiterates its unwavering support to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

In conclusion, I wish to repeat Norway's appreciation for the work Ambassadors Sajdik and Apakan and their teams, continue to do under very demanding circumstances.

Thank you.