



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°942
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EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

Mr Chairman, the European Union and its Member States reiterate their full support to the international diplomatic efforts within the Normandy process and the Trilateral Contact Group. The conflict, which started six years ago as a consequence of acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces, remains a bleeding wound on the European continent with the human toll already exceeding 13.000 lives. The urgency to find an end to this conflict is obvious. In this context, the EU commends the constructive approach displayed by Ukraine and calls on Russia to act likewise.

A sustainable political solution, based on the Minsk agreements, needs to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. Last week we received in this forum an extensive presentation by one delegation on all the points of the Minsk Package of Measures. Let us recall the first point listed there, i.e. an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire, where we need to see urgent action. The immediate ceasefire was also the essential point of the Minsk Protocol of 5 September 2014. This was also

reconfirmed by the Normandy Summit last December. Regrettably, all the deadlines passed while the violence continued.

We deplore the military escalation and offensive attempts near Zolote, as reported yesterday, as they go against the urgent need for an immediate ceasefire and show a lack of commitment to the implementation of the Minsk agreements and the measures agreed at the Normandy Summit. We urge the sides to fully respect their reiterated commitments; in particular, we call on Russia to exert its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to ensure that the ceasefire be fully implemented.

In this forum, we have already heard many times, including last week, statements by the Russian delegation reproaching some participating States, including EU Member States, in respect to the provision of training and military equipment to the Ukrainian armed forces. There were even allusions that such military cooperation was in contradiction with point 10 of the Minsk Package of Measures. We decisively reject such unfounded criticism and recall the long-standing principle of the OSCE that all the participating States have the inherent right to freely choose the course of their foreign and security policy. The political and security cooperation between sovereign States is a normal practice, in particular when it is conducted in a transparent way, with information available to the public. We call on Russia to intensify its reflections on its

possible contribution to the implementation of point 10 of the Minsk Package of Measures.

Although last week's meeting of the TCG has not delivered tangible results, we are encouraged by reports on the progress on at least one new disengagement areas, on which we hope to see an agreement in a very near future. Disengagement areas can be important confidence building measures, but they are not a replacement for the full and comprehensive ceasefire. This was also confirmed by SMM reports over the past few weeks on ceasefire violations inside and in close vicinity to the existing disengagement areas, to which we drew attention both in this forum and at the Permanent Council. Moreover, the SMM continues to inform all of us on the presence in the disengagement areas of members of armed formations wearing JCCC armbands without being entitled to, which constitutes a violation of the TCG agreement on disengagement. In this context, we reiterate our call on Russia to return to the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination which could be an added capability for the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

We once again reaffirm our strong support to the SMM and reiterate our commitment to back the Mission in every possible way, including financially and by providing qualified staff and appropriate equipment, allowing it to continue to implement its mandate effectively. The safety and security of the SMM is of primary importance to us. We welcome the conclusions of the Normandy Four supporting safe and secure access of the SMM throughout Ukraine, with a view to the implementation of its mandate to its full extent. We recall our position 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.

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, ALBANIA, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, 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.