



**EUROPEAN UNION**  
**OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°899**  
**Vienna, 21 November 2018**

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**EU Statement on the Security situation in and around Ukraine**

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Madame Chairperson, the European Union and its Member States and other participating States repeatedly call in this Forum for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements to achieve a sustainable political solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine in line with OSCE principles and commitments. By supporting the illegal so-called “elections” organised by Russia-backed armed formations in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions on 11 November, the Russian Federation is violating the Minsk agreements and undermining efforts to resolve the conflict it started and continues to fuel. We reiterate that the full implementation of the Minsk agreements remains key to reaching a sustainable political solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

At our last meeting, we and other participating States have strongly condemned the downing of the SMM long-range UAV on 27 October. Regrettably we are yet to receive a credible explanation from the Russian Federation regarding the responsibility of Russia and the armed formations it backs for this unacceptable incident. We note that this has been the ninth LR UAV lost. In this context we are deeply concerned that another LR UAV experienced severe jamming on 9 November while flying over Korsun, an area held by Russia-backed armed formations. We underline that any interference with SMM technical equipment goes against the letter and the spirit of the Minsk agreements. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

Madame Chairperson, in addition to these attempts to blind the SMM from the air, the SMM has been experiencing continued and systematic restrictions to its freedom of movement over the past two weeks, predominantly in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations: in the period of 5-11 November this happened on 27 occasions. The vast majority of restrictions in areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations once again occurred in the southern Donetsk region, where the armed formations repeatedly denied access to Zaichenko, Bezimenne and Novoazovsk - locations close to the border with the

Russian Federation. While the SMM was denied passage, the Mission observed civilian cars passing through. We repeat that the SMM including its technical equipment must be assured safe, secure and unimpeded access throughout Ukraine, including the Crimean peninsula and along the Ukraine-Russia border.

We remain deeply concerned about the negative consequences of the conflict on the civilian population living in the vicinity of the line of contact. During the period of 5-11 November alone the SMM recorded more than 8.000 ceasefire violations, with the situation in the conflict zone remaining highly volatile and unpredictable. The civilian population continues to bear a heavy toll in the conflict while facing threats to their lives and damage to their property and critical infrastructure. In this context, we once again reiterate our call on the sides to disengage, withdraw heavy weapons and step up efforts on comprehensive mine action, in order to ensure a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire as an important step toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

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 regarding information 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 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 FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF 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 Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.