



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°902
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EU Statement on the Security situation in and around Ukraine

The EU and its Member States remain deeply concerned about the volatile security situation in the conflict zone. In the period of 19 November - 2 December alone, the SMM recorded more than 10,000 ceasefire violations. The situation remains unpredictable with severe repercussions for the civilians living in the vicinity of the contact line. Sadly, the SMM continues to report about civilian casualties and observe damage to civilian infrastructure and property, as well as presence of military hardware in residential areas close to the contact line, which puts civilians further at risk. This is unacceptable and we reiterate our call on all 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 repeat our condemnation of any impediments to the SMM's freedom of movement as well as interference with the Mission's technical equipment. While we are still to receive a substantial explanation from the Russian Federation regarding the downing of the SMM LR UAV on 27 October close to Ukraine-Russia border, we reiterate our condemnation of the ongoing systematic restrictions to the SMM's work, occurring primarily in areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations. Over the past two weeks, the SMM was again denied access to areas of the southern Donetsk region. Russia-backed armed formations have continuously restricted the SMM's access to non-government-controlled areas adjacent to the Sea of Azov, particularly to Siedove (since 25 April 2017) and Bezimenne (since 26 June 2018), and to Novoazovsk, which results in limited ability of the SMM to monitor the coastal areas. This is particularly worrying in the context of the recent dangerous increase in tensions in the Azov Sea and the Kerch Strait which has led to the seizure of Ukrainian vessels and their crews by Russia and shots being fired at them, wounding several Ukrainian servicemen. We are dismayed at this use of force by Russia

which, against the backdrop of increasing militarisation in the area, is unacceptable and we call strongly on Russia to release the captured vessels, their crew and equipment unconditionally and without delay.

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.