



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

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

Delivered by chargé d'Affaires a.i. Henning Hj. Johansen
at the Permanent Council Vienna, 1 February 2019

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

I would like to join others and thank Ambassadors Apakan and Sajdik for their reports to the Permanent Council. They and their teams continue to have Norway's full support.

Norway is relieved to note the significant reduction in civilian casualties for 2018. Unfortunately, but not unexpectedly, the two ambassadors have not found many other positive developments to report on. We are deeply concerned about the situation for the civilian population in Eastern Ukraine, which is still no better than it has been. The ceasefire continues to be no more than a theoretical construct on paper to which the parties pay little or no regard. Not only are mines not being cleared, but new mines are also laid. We yet again have to recall the obligations under the Mine Ban Convention, the amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and other instruments of International Humanitarian Law. The parties all have a responsibility to protect the civilian population from the dangers that arise from military operations.

We commend the efforts of the SMM to facilitate repair of critical infrastructure. We call on all parties to avoid damaging such infrastructure, which is vital for daily life in the conflict-affected areas.

SMM's monitors continue to face impediments, restrictions, threats and intimidation, predominantly in non-government controlled areas. In addition to this being unacceptable for our monitors' safety, it also limits our ability to get a full picture of the conflict. We recall that the SMM's mandate covers all Ukrainian territory, including the

Crimean peninsula. All parties to the conflict should contribute to the SMM being able to fulfil its mandate.

We would like to thank Ambassador Apakan for his sincere efforts in promoting gender mainstreaming in the SMM, as seen *inter alia* in the thematic report “Gender Dimensions of SMM Monitoring” from December last year. A comprehensive approach to gender issues is necessary both for the SMM to function well as a mission and in order to achieve the best possible results on the ground.

Mr. Chair,

After the Russian Federation illegally annexed Crimea and Sevastopol, it has continued to pursue a policy of gradually imposing unilateral control of the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov. The clearest example of this is the arrest of Ukrainian vessels and crew on 25 November last year. Norway again urges Russia to release the sailors and the vessels immediately and to honour its obligations under International Law, including the Law of the Sea, and under international agreements to which it is party.

Norway reiterates its strong support of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, including the Crimean Peninsula and the adjoining territorial waters.

It is almost five years since Russia violated international law by occupying Crimea and destabilising Eastern Ukraine. Since then, the conflict has resulted in the death of thousands of people and displacement and suffering of millions. It also remains a danger to security in the OSCE area, and a peaceful settlement is of utmost importance to us all. We thank ambassadors Sajdik and Apakan for the important work they and their teams continue to do under very demanding circumstances.

Thank you.