



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°994 Vienna, 24 November 2021

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chair, the European Union and its Member States are deeply concerned by the deterioration of the security situation in the conflict zone. Last week, the SMM observed more than 5,000 ceasefire violations and explosions, almost twice the number of the week before. As stressed by the SMM, these numbers were even higher than the daily average in 2020 before the entry into force of the new additional ceasefire measures. This upward trend is extremely worrying and must be reversed. We reiterate that the ceasefire can be best preserved if commitments made in the TCG, including the additional measures agreed in July 2020, are adhered to by both sides.

We underline the importance of international diplomatic efforts within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group, aimed at reaching a political solution to the conflict in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We call on both sides to implement the Minsk agreements in their entirety and underscore Russia's responsibility, as a party to the conflict, in this regard. We regret that Russia repeatedly refused to meet on the level of the Normandy Foreign Ministers. In addition, a prolonged stand-still in the TCG must be avoided as it would be detrimental both to the security and the humanitarian situation in the conflict zone. We urge both sides to also implement, in good faith, the commitments undertaken at the Normandy Summit on 9 December 2019. We commend Ukraine for its constructive approach and concrete actions taken in this regard and look forward, despite some recent discouraging steps, to a change of heart on the other side.

The unprecedented restrictions that the SMM is facing on its freedom of movement remain unacceptable. We deplore the fact that the SMM is being denied access on an almost daily basis by the Russia-backed armed formations in the non-government controlled areas. In addition, the SMM UAVs are consistently subjected to jamming and interference, thus reducing the use of SMMs long range UAVs below full capacity. In this context, we deplore the incident on 19 November, when members of the Russia-backed armed formations denied the SMM access to Staromykhailivka (NGCA) and even threatened to shoot down an SMM mini-UAV. Three other incidents of denial of access by Russia backed armed formations occurred yesterday as we read it this morning in the latest SMM spot report. These restrictions are an illustration of non-compliance with the commitments contained in the Minsk agreements, the SMM's mandate and the 2019 conclusions of the Normandy Summit. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially. We urge the Russian Federation to ensure that all restrictions on the SMM's freedom of movement are lifted and that the SMM and its assets have safe and secure access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea.

Transparency, including in the areas near the Ukrainian-Russian State border currently not under control by the Ukrainian government, is a key provision of the Minsk agreements. Full monitoring and verification of the border areas with a subsequent creation of a security zone there, as foreseen in Minsk Protocol of 5 September 2014, would be an important confidence-building measure that would allow for further progress in the conflict resolution process. We therefore reiterate once again our strong support to the SMM's updated Concept Note on enhancing monitoring of the non-government controlled areas near the border, as well as concrete measures to overcome the existing difficulties, as suggested by the SMM in the Concept Note.

In conclusion, 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* 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 Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.