



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°947 Vienna, 27 May 2020

EU Statement on “Regional Security: the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov Region”

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome the speakers to the Forum for Security Co-operation and thank them for their thought-provoking presentations on challenges and opportunities in the context of regional cooperation in the Black Sea region. We commend the Ukrainian FSC Chairmanship for continuing the tradition of devoting our security dialogues to regional security issues. Given the current security environment, persisting conventional threats as well as negative consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, today’s topic is especially timely and relevant.

Mr. Chairperson, today, we were again reminded of the multifaceted security environment we are all facing. Taking this into account, the European Union is determined to pursue a united and responsible external engagement in cooperation with our partners to advance our common values and interests, in line with the principles of the EU Global Strategy and the revised European Neighbourhood Policy. Our main priorities will remain the same: strengthening resilience of states and societies in the EU Neighbourhood, promoting and supporting cooperative regional arrangements, as well as reinforcing global governance and multilateralism based on international law, including the principles of the UN Charter, and the Helsinki Final Act.

Mr. Chairperson, the European Union remains deeply concerned about the situation in the wider Black Sea area, where protracted conflicts have challenged the core of the European security order. We reiterate that respect for international law, including the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, including freedom of navigation, remain a cornerstone of our approach to regional cooperation in the Black Sea area. We call on all participating States to uphold international law, democracy, human rights, cooperation, and each country's right to choose its future freely. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, which we do not and will not recognise, and its destabilising actions in eastern Ukraine have negatively influenced the security situation and the level of regional cooperation in the Black Sea area. The EU remains steadfast in its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Chairperson, the European Union has been consistent in expressing its deep concern about the ongoing large-scale militarisation of the Crimean Peninsula by Russia, which impacts the security situation in the Black Sea region and beyond. We also condemn the construction of the Kerch bridge without the consent of Ukraine, and we call on Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage of all ships through the Kerch Strait, in accordance with international law. The illegal restrictions to such passage have negative economic consequences for Ukraine's ports in the Azov Sea and the whole region.

Despite the security challenges, the EU is committed to proceed with regional cooperation in the Black Sea. This region is of strategic importance to all of us and presents opportunities for economic development and connectivity that should be harnessed for the prosperity, stability and resilience in the region and beyond. In this context the Black Sea Synergy Initiative remains the main policy framework for the EU's actions regarding regional cooperation in the Black Sea. This initiative aims to focus political attention on the region and foster cooperation within the region, and between the region as a whole and the EU. It is flexible and inclusive, sector-oriented

and pragmatic, aiming at the participation of all states in the region. Its focus is on building confidence, fostering regional dialogue and delivering tangible results to the benefit of both the region and the EU. We remain committed to cooperation and engagement with the main regional and international actors active in the region, such as the Black Sea Commission and Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation.

Mr. Chairperson, building trust and confidence through cooperation is at the heart of basic OSCE principles and commitments, including in the politico-military sphere. Full implementation of agreed confidence and security building measures in good faith, in letter and in spirit, is crucial for increasing predictability, military security and stability in the region. We call on all participating States to demonstrate maximum openness and transparency, and provide relevant information, also to ensure international observation of their significant military exercises. The Vienna Document plays a key role in this regard with its transparency measures aimed at enhancing trust and ensuring predictability. We reiterate our call on all participating States to implement it and constructively engage in the efforts to modernise it.

Finally, we once again thank the Chairmanship for providing us with the opportunity to exchange views on this interesting topic and request this statement be attached to the Journal of the Day.

The Candidate Countries the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA, MONTENEGRO, ALBANIA, the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA 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.