



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°938
Vienna, 22 January 2020

EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chairman, the European Union and its Member States reiterate their full support to the continued international diplomatic efforts within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group to find an end to the ongoing conflict. We urge the sides to implement their commitments, including those undertaken at the Normandy Summit on 9 December, in good faith. In this context, we commend the Ukrainian leadership for their constructive approach and the political will to negotiate an end to the conflict and call on Russia to act likewise.

We commend the role of the TCG in the facilitation of the mutual release of detainees which took place on 29 December according to the agreed formula "all identified for all identified". As a result, 76 Ukrainian citizens were released from captivity in the non-government controlled areas. This was a welcome step in the right direction. However, the efforts towards the release of all remaining conflict-related detainees, in line with the Minsk Agreements, and the release of all illegally detained Ukrainian citizens in Russia and Crimea, including Crimean Tatars, should continue.

One of the most urgent tasks remains the implementation of a full, unlimited and comprehensive ceasefire. Too many lives have already been lost in this conflict. Regretfully, such a ceasefire was not achieved by the end of last year, despite the clear commitment by the sides at the Normandy Summit. The relatively "quiet" holiday period seems to be over with the number of ceasefire violations again on the rise, regrettably, resulting both in civilian casualties and a sharp increase in fatalities amongst Ukrainian servicemen, in particular as a result of artillery shelling.

As was already mentioned in the security dialogue, mines remain the main cause of casualties amongst civilians. We strongly condemn the use of anti-personnel mines, the

*) Corr.1 due to technical issue of cutting words while creating pdf document

presence of which has regrettably again been spotted by the SMM in the non-government-controlled areas north of Luhansk, as mentioned in the daily report of 16 January. In this context, we reiterate the urgency of the work that remains to be done in the de-mining process, including the development and implementation of an updated de-mining plan and new priority areas.

We also look forward to the designation of the new entry-exit check points and of the three new disengagement areas and commend the SMM for its role and professionalism in monitoring the disengagement process. We reiterate the importance of safe and unhindered access for the SMM to monitor the three existing disengagement areas. We are concerned by SMM reports of ceasefire violations assessed as within the Petrivske disengagement area and of persons in military-style clothing inside the disengagement area, near the former positions of the Russia-backed armed formations.

As a staunch supporter of the SMM, we welcome the support of the Normandy Summit for safe and secure access of the SMM throughout Ukraine, with a view to the implementation of its mandate to the full extent. The safety and security of the SMM is of primary importance to us. We recall our position that any impediments to the SMM's work, which occur predominantly in the non-government controlled areas, including attempts to destroy SMM's assets, are unacceptable. We deplore the targeting of SMM assets, including SMM UAVs by means of signal interference and small arms fire which occurred on at least four occasions during the last week on the non-governmental side of the contact line. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

We condemn yet another step towards further forced integration of the illegally-annexed Crimean Peninsula with the Russian Federation, through the opening at the end of last year of the railway section of the Kerch bridge and railway traffic from Russia to the Crimean Peninsula, without Ukraine's consent. This constitutes another violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity by Russia.

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 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 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.

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