



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°969 Vienna, 24 February 2021

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Madam Chair, the European Union and its Member States value this Forum as an important platform for respectful exchanges on the relevant politico-military aspects of security. In the last few meetings we heard references to “boring” discussions on this subject that has been regularly raised by Ukraine for seven years now and to which the EU Member States as well as many other delegations do regularly respond. Let us be clear, we would sincerely wish not to have to do so. For this to happen, Russia would need to reverse its actions that contravene the principles of international law and OSCE commitments and to contribute genuinely – through clearly expressed political will and concrete and constructive actions – to a resolution of the conflict. Until this happens, we will continue to raise our voice in this Forum in defence of these principles. We will continue to call on both sides to implement the Minsk agreements in their entirety and underscore Russia’s responsibility in this regard.

The Trilateral Contact Group that consists of Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE, the latter as mediator, met last week for the third time this year and again with no tangible results. We regret that political considerations continue hindering the much needed progress. We echo the call of the CiO Special Representative Amb. Heidi Grau on the sides to show the necessary political will. Many commitments of the last Normandy Four Summit are still outstanding and need to be implemented without further delay. In this context, we commend Ukraine for the steps taken to open the Shchas-

tia and Zolote EECPs and its willingness to move ahead with the adoption of the updated de-mining plan as well as new disengagement areas.

We recall our position that the SMM should have full access to the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, including Crimea and along the whole Ukraine-Russia state border. All impediments to the SMM's work, most of which occur in the non-government controlled areas, including attempts to destroy SMM's assets, should cease. On 21 February, another mini-UAV was damaged by small arms fire while conducting a pre-announced flight. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets, should be held accountable, both politically and financially. Transparency, including at the areas near the Ukrainian-Russian State border currently not under control by the Ukrainian government, is of key importance. We fully support the SMM plans to open additional Forward Patrol Bases near the border and call on Russia to ensure that the SMM obtain the necessary security guarantees.

Madame Chair, as these days we mark the seventh anniversary of the start of Russia's aggressive actions in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol in a blatant violation of international law, which led to the illegal annexation of the peninsula, let us recall our principled position on Crimea, which is part of Ukraine. The European Union condemns the ongoing militarization of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation and the presence of Russian troops as being contrary to the national sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We regret the build-up of forces and the holding of Russian military exercises in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov and we are deeply concerned about the transfers of advanced weapon systems including nuclear-capable aircraft and missiles, weapons, ammunition and military personnel to the territory of Ukraine as well as the illegal seizure and establishment of control by Russia over the former nuclear weapons storage sites in Crimea. We call on Russia to refrain from unlawful military activities in Crimea, the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, which further exacerbate tensions in the region and beyond.

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 REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, 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 and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.