



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°993 Vienna, 17 November 2021

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#### **EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine**

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Mr. Chair, the European Union and its Member States continue to follow with concern the worsening security situation in eastern Ukraine, accompanied by an increased hostile rhetoric by the Russian Federation towards Ukraine. We monitor, in close dialogue with our partners, the situation near Ukraine's borders and in illegally annexed Crimea. Any escalatory actions or threatening and de-stabilising behaviour are unacceptable. We remind Russia of the existing mechanisms under the Vienna Document regarding transparency on movement of troops and call upon the Russian Federation to use such mechanisms as part of an effort to de-escalate tensions.

Mr. Chair, the re-commitment to the ceasefire in July 2020 seemed to bring the resolution of the conflict one step closer. It allowed to substantially reduce ceasefire violations and the resulting casualties, in particular among the civilian population. Unfortunately, it did not translate into tangible and sustainable progress, despite the political will and readiness shown by Ukraine. The ongoing degradation of the security situation along the line of contact is of high concern. Last month in October 2021 the SMM recorded the average of 341 ceasefire violations per day. A year ago, in October 2020, that number had been reduced to 16 violations per day. These are not abstract figures. Behind them lie numerous tragedies of lost lives and injuries of both military personnel and civilians.

The unprecedented restrictions that the SMM is facing on its freedom of movement are unacceptable. 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 being subjected to jamming and interference, which

has led to a partial incapacity of SMMs long range UAVs, one of its essential assets. We reiterate that 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 removed and that the SMM and its assets can 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 of key importance. In this context, we welcome and fully support the updated Concept Note of the SMM on enhancing the monitoring of the non-government controlled areas near the border. We hope that other pS will also support the proposed measures and contribute to their implementation.

We reiterate our strong support for the Minsk agreements and the efforts of both the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group to find a peaceful resolution of the conflict, in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We call on Russia, as a party to the conflict, to move to a constructive approach in these negotiations and in the implementation of all the respective provisions it committed to.

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 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.