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EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°1001
Vienna, 16 February 2022**

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Mr Chair, the European Union and its Member States remain gravely concerned about the worsening security situation in and around Ukraine. Russia's military build-up and troop movements near the border with Ukraine, its deployment of combat forces in, and joint drills with Belarus as well as its increased military presence and naval exercises in the Black Sea and in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula cannot be regarded as standard military activities. Combined with thinly veiled threats and aggressive rhetoric towards another sovereign participating State they constitute a most serious security challenge to all of us and must be reversed immediately. We recall that the ongoing conflict has already brought immense human suffering, resulting in multiple losses of life, injuries and displacements.

We commend the OSCE Secretary General Helga Schmid for her letter of 14 February giving early warning of the risk of further escalation of the already dire security situation in line with the tasking of the Vilnius 3/11 MC Decision. We echo her call for de-escalation and for full respect of the OSCE principles and commitments that underpin European security, including those enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. The European Union always stood and will continue to stand ready to make full use of all available tools, procedures and mechanisms within the OSCE, including the Renewed OSCE European Security Dialogue. We urge all participating States, to do the same.

In this vein, earlier this week we joined the consultation meetings organised under the risk reduction mechanism of the Vienna Document regarding unusual military activities on the territory of Belarus and those of the Russian Federation. We fully support the objective of the procedure to reduce risk and to dispel the serious concerns. We appreciate that Belarus followed the procedure foreseen in the Vienna Document, although we regret that the answers provided failed to address the concerns in a satisfactory manner. As to the stance of the Russian Federation, we witnessed again its full disregard of the common OSCE commitments on military transparency it has signed up to. Russia's refusal of engaging in this institutionalised and commonly agreed process does nothing to dispel tensions and concerns regarding its ongoing military build-up.

Mr Chair, we fully support ongoing international diplomatic efforts, including within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group, which are 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 strongly condemn the Russian State Duma's decision yesterday to submit a call to President Putin to recognise the non-government controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine as independent entities. Such recognition would violate the Minsk agreements and derail ongoing efforts conducted on their basis.

Today, more than ever, we wish to reiterate our deep appreciation to the SMM staff for their professionalism and dedication to operate in a challenging security environment, amidst the heightened international tensions and the increasing restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement in the areas held by the Russia-backed armed formations. The SMM staff are our eyes and ears on the ground and

their security and safety remain our priority. We look forward to the briefing tomorrow by Chief Monitor Yaşar Halit Çevik to the Permanent Council also in this respect.

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.

Any further military aggression by Russia against Ukraine will have massive consequences and severe cost, including a wide array of sectoral, financial and individual restrictive measures.

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 and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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