



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°981 Vienna, 30 June 2021

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chair, conflict resolution remains a top priority for the EU and its Member States. Our intention was to speak about the ongoing conflicts in the OSCE area, including the conflict in eastern Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea at the Annual Security Review Conference this week. We regret and are deeply disappointed that due to the lack of consensus the Conference is not taking place as scheduled for the first time since the Ministerial Decision in Porto in 2002. However, allow me to make a few remarks on the security situation in and around Ukraine.

Regarding Russia's acts of aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol our position has been and will remain clear and consistent. These are in blatant breach of international law and of OSCE principles and commitments which are fundamental to the European security order. We reject the Russian narrative of portraying itself as a mediator in an "internal Ukrainian conflict", thus obstructing meaningful discussions in the TCG as well as in the Normandy format. We urge Russia, as a party to the conflict, to take responsibility for its actions, to constructively engage in the discussion of the TCG and the Normandy format and to implement its part of the Minsk agreements fully and in good faith.

We underline the importance of a faithful implementation of the OSCE principles and commitments, including those concerning military transparency. We therefore value

substantiated briefings by the participating States on their military exercises in the zone of application of the Vienna Document, as for example Ukraine did last week in relation to the current Exercise Sea Breeze 2021. We regret that Russia, on its part, has chosen not to engage meaningfully under the Vienna Document Risk Reduction Mechanism concerning its military build-up along its borders with Ukraine and in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula when the mechanism was triggered by Ukraine back in April.

Against this backdrop, the security situation at the contact line in eastern Ukraine remains increasingly volatile. We are deeply concerned about the fragility of the ceasefire as it was illustrated by the SMM weekly report, registering a substantial spike of ceasefire violations. We call on the sides to redouble their efforts to maintain the ceasefire which remains critical for further steps in the settlement of this conflict. In this context, we commend Ukraine for its determination to do so, as well as for its restraint in responding to military provocations by the Russia-backed armed formations, despite the regretful and unacceptable death toll among its military personnel.

The SMM must have safe, secure, unconditional and unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including the illegally annexed Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, with a view to the implementation of its mandate to its full extent. We recall that the Minsk Protocol calls for permanent monitoring of the border and verification by the OSCE, and that the Minsk Package of Measures includes the commitment to reinstate full Ukrainian control over its entire international border. We believe that effective and comprehensive monitoring of the Russia-Ukraine state border is necessary to improve the security situation and to help find a sustainable political solution to the conflict.

We deplore any attempts to harass, intimidate or obstruct the work of the SMM and its monitors and condemn the continued restrictions, which occur overwhelmingly in non-government-controlled areas. We recall our position that any impediments to the SMM's work, including attempts to damage or destroy the SMM's assets, are unacceptable. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets must be held accountable, both politically and financially.

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 for 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 Russia's actions to block access to parts of the Black Sea, including near illegally-annexed Crimea and the Kerch Strait, and 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.

Mr. Chair, I kindly request that this statement be attached to the Journal of the Day.

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.

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