



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°932 Vienna, 20 November 2019

EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chairperson, the EU and its Member States welcome the completion of the withdrawal of forces and hardware in Petrivske that occurred last week and the overall progress in the two other disengagement areas. We welcome the agreement to hold a summit of the Normandy Four on 9 December in Paris and hope that this upcoming summit will mark an important step and help to obtain concrete results towards the peaceful resolution of the conflict. This is only possible if there is strong political will on both sides. In this regard, we commend the Ukrainian leadership for its unwavering commitment to peaceful conflict resolution and call on Russia to act likewise.

We note the return by Russia earlier this week of the three Ukrainian vessels seized in the Black Sea almost a year ago in an act of unjustified use of force near the Kerch Strait. These vessels should have never been seized in the first place. The return of the vessels was long overdue, in particular in the light of the binding order of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea of 25 May 2019. And finally, and most importantly, Russia must not hinder free passage to and from the Sea of Azov in accordance with international law.

We deplore the fact that the security situation in the conflict areas continues to be highly volatile, as reported by the SMM, with severe consequences for the civilians living near the contact line. We are very concerned that ceasefire violations have reached pre-July ceasefire levels and in this regard, we deeply regret reports of casualties among Ukrainian servicemen, the civilian population and damage to civilian infrastructure. We call on the sides to refrain from positioning military hardware and personnel in civilian settlements.

Mr. Chairperson, any impediments to the SMM's work, including attempts to destroy SMM's assets, which continue mainly in areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations, are unacceptable. The SMM must have safe, secure, unconditional and unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine.

Mr. Chairperson, last week on 14 November, yet another so-called "humanitarian" Russian Convoy entered Ukrainian territory. We deeply regret that, once again, this occurred without a full inspection by the Ukrainian border guards and in violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. This does little to allay concerns about the possible military nature of the transported cargo.

In this context, we also note the SMM reports, e.g. that dated 15 November last week about 13 cargo trucks with Russian Federation licence plates (with "Humanitarian Aid from the Russian Federation" written in Russian on two of them) entering a military compound in the southern part of non-government-controlled Luhansk city, as well as the reported "night convoys" that were spotted by SMM on numerous occasions crossing the Ukraine-Russia state border in the areas where there are no official border crossing points and necessary infrastructure.

The people in the region are suffering from a conflict which is a consequence of acts of aggression by the Russian Federation and the armed formations it backs against Ukraine. We have not seen any evidence that the humanitarian aid Russia claims to deliver has had any sizeable beneficial impact on the population concerned. In addition, humanitarian aid should be delivered through an international mechanism. Let us recall that international mechanisms for humanitarian aid do exist. The EU and its Member States have provided, from the beginning of the conflict, more than 406 MEUR of humanitarian aid to the region, out of which 45%, i.e. 182 MEUR were destined to the non-government-controlled areas. The International Committee of the Red Cross sends on a regular basis trucks with humanitarian aid through the line of contact. The United Nations and some other pS around this table have also been active in providing humanitarian relief to Ukraine. We once again call on Russia to

join an international mechanism for the delivery of humanitarian aid and to desist from its current practice incompatible with basic principles of international law.

Mr Chairman, we recall our deep concern about reports of the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia in areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations, including sophisticated equipment in the Russian arsenal such as the “Zhitel” jamming device, “TOS-1 Buratino” Multiple Launch Rocket System and “Orlan-10” UAV, that is not in the Ukrainian inventory, but which has been noted by OSCE SMM monitors. We call on Russia to explain the presence of this sophisticated equipment in the territory of Ukraine.

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 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 and LIECHTENSTEIN, 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.