



STATEMENT IN REPLY TO THE BRIEFINGS
GIVEN BY AMBASSADORS GRAU AND ÇEVİK

Delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 22 April 2021

Mr. Chair,

Let me start by thanking the Ambassadors Cevic and Grau for their efforts, and for the information given to us today.

Norway welcomes the meeting of the political advisers in the Normandy format on 19 April. We urge all parties to intensify the work in the Trilateral Contact Group and the working groups. This includes agreeing on measures to strengthen the cease-fire.

We regret to note the increasing number of cease-fire violations. New trenches, improvement of fortifications and more heavy weapons on both sides of the contact line are worrying developments. Most of the weapons have been found in non-government-controlled areas. We call on the parties to respect the cease-fire as this would save lives, protect civilians and lower tension.

The increase in cease-fire violations coincides with Russia's deployment of forces in Crimea and close to the border with Ukraine. This increases tension and risk of escalation. We have expressed our support for using the Vienna Document to strengthen transparency with a view to stabilising the situation. Norway calls on Russia to deescalate by immediately reversing its military deployments in Crimea and close to Ukraine's borders.

The report of the Chief Monitor again highlights problems caused by the prolonged partial closure of crossing points as well as restrictions due to Covid-19. The armed formations have only two out of five crossing points open. We call on all parties to open

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crossing points and facilitate crossing, including for humanitarian support, to ease the hardships for civilians living in conflict-affected areas.

The SMM reports unacceptable restrictions on its freedom of movement, mostly in non-government-controlled areas. The Mission's UAVs continue to experience signal interference as well as small-arms fire. We call on all parties to enable the SMM to fulfil its mandate and provide unhindered access to all parts of Ukrainian territory. We urge the Russian Federation to use its considerable influence on the armed formations it backs to ensure that the SMM's freedom of movement is respected and its UAVs and cameras not damaged.

Norway appreciates the Mission's efforts to adjust to the consequences of COVID-19 to protect the health, safety and security of its staff. Measures such as mass screening, quarantine and use of personal protective equipment are important to protect individual mission members and local communities, as well as to ensure that the Mission can keep up its operation.

Mr. Chair

The agreement on the budget and the extension of the mandate of the SMM was reached very late. We urge all participating States to provide the SMM with the resources it needs to fulfil its mandate on behalf of us all.

To conclude, allow me to reiterate Norway's strong support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, including the Crimean Peninsula and the adjoining territorial waters.

Thank you