



## EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°921  
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### EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

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The EU and its Member States welcome the calm situation in the disengagement area of Stanytsia Luhanska after the withdrawal of forces and military hardware, as observed and documented by the SMM. We commend the SMM for its active involvement in facilitating the process of disengagement. We call on all sides to take all necessary steps to maintain the momentum and ensure the long-term sustainability of the process. We would welcome further efforts towards a lasting ceasefire, including in the other two disengagement areas of Petrivske and Zolote. While the reports about the calm situation in the Petrivske disengagement area are encouraging, the situation inside and around the Zolote disengagement area, where the SMM observes continued military activities, remains of concern. We reiterate our call on all sides to take all necessary steps for the successful completion of disengagement and to ensure its long term sustainability. We urge the Russian Federation to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to this end.

We remain concerned about the volatile security situation in the areas of conflict, which is a consequence of acts of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The SMM continues to report about numerous ceasefire violations along the contact line, the number of which fluctuates on a daily basis, but overall remains high, while the death toll keeps rising. The mission further reports on weapons in violation of withdrawal lines on both sides of the contact line. For example in the daily report of 12 July the SMM registered

the presence of over 40 multiple launch rocket systems in non-government-controlled areas of Luhansk region. In addition, mines and UXO continue to pose an imminent threat not only to the civilian population, but also to SMM monitors. We once again deplore the laying of new mines and reiterate our call to disengage, withdraw heavy weapons and step up efforts on comprehensive mine action. We condemn the shelling of residential areas and critical infrastructure, the placing of military hardware near civilian infrastructure thus exposing civilians to further danger. We call on all sides to finalize without further delay the discussion in the framework of the TCG on the so called 'harvest ceasefire', and to adhere to it fully.

Mr. Chairman, the SMM continues to face restrictions to its freedom of movement and other impediments in the fulfilment of its mandate, which occur predominantly in areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations. We strongly deplore that the safety and security of SMM monitors continues to be endangered by shelling and small-arms fire in their proximity. On 5 July an SMM patrol positioned east of the Zolote disengagement area heard bullets flying over their heads and impacting on a hard structure within ten to fifteen meters of their position. This is unacceptable. We strongly urge the signatories of the Minsk agreements to ensure full safety and security of the SMM and honour their commitment to ensure rapid response to specific violations registered by the SMM. We underline that the SMM must have unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including to the uncontrolled Ukraine-Russia state border and to areas in its vicinity. In this context, we call on the Russian Federation to provide an explanation regarding the illegal movement of trucks near Stepne, which was recently revealed by aerial imagery available to the SMM in an area where there are no official border crossing points.

We strongly condemn the continued targeting and jamming of the SMM UAVs. On 12 July small-arms fire was yet again directed at an SMM mini-UAV, this time near Metalist, in non-government controlled area 7 km north-west of Luhansk. Endangering monitors or their equipment is unacceptable and such

incidents must be investigated fully. Ensuring the safety and security of Mission staff and assets is a responsibility of all participating States.

Our position on the unjustified use of force by Russia at the Kerch Strait on 25 November 2018 and its negative impact in the Azov Sea and Russia's violations of international law is well known. We strongly call on Russia to immediately release all 24 crew members and return their vessels unconditionally and without delay, which is also in accordance with the binding order of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea delivered on 25 May. We expect Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage through the Kerch Strait to and from the Azov Sea, in accordance with international law.

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 negatively 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 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.