



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

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

Delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen
at the Permanent Council, Vienna, 7 October 2021

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madame Chair,

I would like to join others in thanking Ambassadors Çevik and Kinnunen for their reports, and also for the valuable work they and their teams carry out. Let me seize the opportunity to welcome ambassador Kinnunen in this capacity, and to this Council.

The modest reduction in ceasefire violations in Ukraine during the past three months is in itself positive. It is therefore disheartening that at the same time there was an increase in civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure. This could and should have been prevented.

We saw that in the months following the entry into force of the strengthened ceasefire in July 2020, there was a major reduction in the number of casualties. This can be repeated. Norway calls on all parties to show the political will to seek a durable ceasefire and engage constructively towards resolving the conflict.

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We are glad to hear ambassador Kinnunen's assessment that there is agreement to go back to physical meetings and hope that at least it would be possible to find a suitable venue. Even better if it would move the discussions forward and out of the present situation.

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the movement of civilians across the contact line has been severely restricted. Huge numbers of people have for a year and a half been cut off from collecting pensions, seeking medical treatment, caring for relatives or carrying out other necessary activities. It is essential that impediments to crossing are lifted, particularly at checkpoints in the non-government controlled area.

Covid-19 must not be used to unduly justify excessive restrictions – neither on the freedom of movement of civilians nor on that of the SMM. We call on all parties to enable the SMM to fulfil its mandate by providing unhindered access to all parts of Ukraine's territory. 90 per cent of restrictions are reported to have occurred in non-government-controlled areas. Thus, we particularly 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, as well as its cameras and other technical assets.

Like others, Norway would be interested to hear about possibilities to erect forward patrol bases or use more wide-reaching UAVs in order to observe a larger part of the non-government controlled areas. In that regard we would encourage all actors to do its utmost to prevent the jamming of SMM UAVs.

We are also concerned that mines, UXO and other explosive devices continue to pose a grave threat to civilians, in addition to limiting the SMM's freedom of movement. Once again, we call on all parties to refrain from laying mines and to contribute to mine clearance.

Madame Chair,

We are happy to hear ambassador Çevic also emphasising the role of women in the work of the SMM. Increased focus on how the gender equality aspects can be included in OSCE field operations and in the whole OSCE conflict cycle toolbox can only contribute positively, and Norway will be supportive in this regard.

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.