



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°979 Vienna, 9 June 2021

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chair, we regret that the security situation in the conflict zone remains volatile. Overcoming the current stalemate requires one key ingredient: political will. The cost of the lack of this political will is high. The latest SMM thematic report on the impact of mines on civilians was another sad reminder to this effect. In this context, we condemn the laying of new mines, including anti-personnel mines, prohibited by the Ottawa Convention, and used by Russia backed armed formations inside the Petrivske disengagement area. We call for a speedy agreement in the TCG on new disengagement areas, de-mining zones and new entry-exit checkpoints. Ukraine has demonstrated its willingness to move ahead on these issues that have been long on the table. We call on the Russian side to do likewise.

The SMM must have full freedom of movement within the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea and along the whole Ukraine-Russia state border. All impediments to the SMM's work, the overwhelming majority of which occur in the non-government controlled areas, are unacceptable. They violate the Mission's mandate agreed by all pS. They also force the Mission to act de facto as three separate operational entities. The SMM is right to draw our attention to this alarming situation on a regular basis.

The increased incidents involving the Mission's UAVs are worrisome. Last week the SMM informed about 86 cases of signal interference, the highest number ever recorded in a single week. As a result, another mini-UAV was lost on 30 May while

flying over non-government controlled areas of Luhansk region. At the same time, the SMM continues to spot modern Russian equipment in the conflict zone, as was the case on 29 May when the Russian electronic warfare system “RB-636V Svet-KU” was spotted in Novoazovsk. This information raises questions on how such sophisticated weapons were transported into Ukraine. We reiterate that targeting of SMM assets must stop. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to make sure that all impediments to the freedom of movement of the Mission and its assets are lifted.

We continue to 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. The Minsk Protocol is unambiguous in stating that the TCG consists of representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE. In this respect, Russia’s attempts to legitimize the so-called “people’s republics” in eastern Ukraine are not constructive. Finding a sustainable solution to the conflict requires frank and honest discussion on its nature, as well as political will to implement the respective commitments. We therefore urge Russia, as a party to the conflict, to take responsibility for its actions and to engage in the discussions on the implementation of the Minsk agreements in good faith.

Effective and comprehensive monitoring of the Ukraine-Russia State border is an integral part of a sustainable political solution to the conflict. We reiterate our disappointment that, due to the position of the Russian Federation, no consensus was possible on the customary four-month extension of the Border Observer Mission (BOM). As the continuous mandate renewals have been affecting the BOM’s functioning, we believe that this reduction has an additional negative effect on BOM’s operations and is a step backwards in terms of finding a sustainable peaceful solution to the conflict.

We recall our position on Russia’s unusual military build-up along its borders with Ukraine and in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula and its lack of meaningful engagement under the Vienna Document Risk Reduction Mechanism invoked by

Ukraine. We continue to call on Russia to provide the necessary transparency on its forces and equipment in line with the commitments under the Vienna Document.

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 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.

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.