



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°928 Vienna, 23 October 2019

EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chairperson, the European Union and its Member States express their deep concern that despite the progress reached in Minsk on 1st October, the security situation in the conflict areas remains volatile. We were saddened to read in the recent SMM's reports about civilians, including children, who were injured from hand-grenades and landmines. We are also concerned about the reports of the casualties among the Ukrainian servicemen and civilian population.

We regret that the renewed disengagement of forces in Zolote and Petrivske has not yet taken place due to ceasefire violations. We echo the statement made by Ambassador Sajdik on 15th October regarding the failure of the sides to renew the disengagement and we hope that in the very-near future we shall witness the implementation of this commitment. This would ease the suffering of civilians living close to the contact line who bear the brunt of this conflict. In this regard, we commend the Ukrainian leadership for its unwavering commitment to peaceful conflict resolution and call on Russia and the armed formations it backs to act likewise.

Mr. Chairperson, last week on 17th October, the 85th Russian Convoy entered Ukrainian territory at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point, as reported by the OSCE Observer Mission. 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.

Mr. Chairperson, any impediments to the SMM's work, including attempts to destroy SMM's assets, which continue predominantly 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.

We reiterate our position on the unjustified use of force by Russia near the Kerch Strait in November 2018, its negative impact in the Black and Azov seas and Russia's violations of international law. We call on Russia to return to Ukraine's custody the three vessels seized in the Black Sea on 25th November last year, in accordance with the binding order of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. We further call on Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage to and from the Sea of Azov, 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 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.