



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chairperson, last week the EU and its Member States welcomed the recent developments in the Trilateral Contact Group, including the agreements on the disengagement at Zolote and Petrivske and on the “Steinmeier” formula. Initial agreement on this formula at the Normandy format and then by TCG shows that progress in the solution of the conflict is possible when the political will from all sides is there. We support the efforts of the Normandy format to foster further progress on the implementation by the parties of the Minsk agreements.

We commend the Ukrainian leadership for its unwavering commitment to the peaceful conflict resolution, as demonstrated yet again at the TCG meeting in Minsk on 1 October, and we call on Russia and the armed formations it backs to act likewise. We regret the disengagement of forces in Zolote and Petrivske was postponed due to the shelling of the positions of Ukrainian forces in these areas, and hope the disengagement there will restart without further delay.

We recall that local elections in certain areas in Donbas should be held within the framework of the Ukrainian legislation, monitored by ODIHR in accordance with OSCE standards, once proper security conditions are in place, including full Ukrainian control over its state border.

We welcome the construction of a bypass bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska and hope for prompt beginning of repair works on the main bridge to be concluded before winter. The situation in Stanytsia Luhanska gives us hope that progress in other disengagement areas is possible too.

However, the EU remains concerned about the volatile situation in the conflict areas and the SMM reports of several significant spikes in ceasefire violations. We strongly encourage strict adherence to the ceasefire recommitment of 21 July. We are convinced that sustainable ceasefire is fundamental for stabilising the situation and unlocking processes in all security-related areas.

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. In order to fulfil its mandate, the SMM must have safe, secure, unconditional and unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including the illegally annexed Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

We reiterate our position on the unjustified use of force by Russia near the Kerch Strait on 25 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 25 November last year, in accordance with the binding order of the International Tribunal for the Law of 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, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, 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.