



**EUROPEAN UNION**

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**EU statement in Response to the Briefings by the Special Representative in Ukraine of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Martin Sajdik, and the Chief Monitor of the OSCE SMM, Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan**

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Ambassadors Sajdik and Apakan, the EU warmly welcomes you to the Permanent Council and commends you for your tireless efforts to obtain lasting peace in line with OSCE fundamental principles and commitments and alleviate the sufferings of the millions of civilians living in the conflict zone.

Ambassador Sajdik, the EU strongly supports the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups, as also stated in the Joint Statement following the 20<sup>th</sup> EU-Ukraine Summit on 9 July. During the reporting period you saw the security situation gradually deteriorating after the recommitments to ceasefire by the sides in March. This led you to facilitate yet another recommitment to the ceasefire which entered into force on 1 July. We welcome this. However, the result of this latest summer recommitment has unfortunately been rather disappointing even though it has reduced the number of violations and the use of heavy weapons. A sustainable improvement of the security situation would require that all sides disengage, withdraw heavy weapons and embark on comprehensive demining. We strongly urge them to do so.

We welcome that there has been a certain reduction so far this year in the number of civilian casualties as compared to 2017. Of great concern is the lack of demining around entry-exit points and the observation of newly laid mines, also close to populated areas. This is a clear violation of commitments given in the TCG. During the reporting period the SMM confirmed 22 civilian casualties caused by mines and

UXOs. Six of these were fatal. You also report that, despite half of the weapon sites remaining beyond reach by patrols due to security measures, the SMM recorded about 1,460 weapons in violation of their respective withdrawal lines. The SMM unfortunately recorded a significant increase in ceasefire violations in and near all three disengagement areas as well as new military-type positions, hardware and forward positions of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and the Russia-backed armed formations inside the Zolote and the Petrivske disengagement areas.

We thank Pierre Morel, Toni Frisch and Per Fischer for their recent briefings to the participating States about their difficult work in their respective working groups. Likewise, we would be interested to hear if there are any developments from these groups that you would like to share? Are there any expectations of a future exchange of detainees and are there any further plans related to securing some of the critical civilian infrastructure sites?

Ambassador Apakan, please extend our appreciation to the monitors who are working tirelessly on the ground in this challenging and hostile environment. Weapons continue to be fired close to SMM patrols and its assets, while the threat from mines remains imminent. The latter despite letters from you requesting comprehensive mine action following the tragic death of Joseph Stone. The SMM also continues to encounter several restrictions of its freedom of movement particularly in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations. We underline yet again that the SMM is mandated to have full, safe, unconditional and unrestricted access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian state border and on the Crimean peninsula. Could you elaborate on how the implementation of the security framework, Standard Operating Procedures and security risk assessment guidelines are helping you to operate in a safe way in the current challenging context?

Ambassador Apakan, the EU stands strongly behind the SMM. We are alarmed about the alleged SMM security breach as outlined in the SMM statement of 16 July and trust that a thorough investigation will be carried out.

The security situation poses a severe challenge for especially those civilians living along the line of contact and we strongly support your call for respecting and protecting civilians and critical civilian infrastructure to ensure access to basic services for civilians, as well as to avert risk of environmental disasters. In non-government-controlled areas, access to humanitarian aid and support remains limited as only few international organisations are permitted to operate under difficult conditions. We call on those in effective control of the area to re-establish full access of all humanitarian organisations to the non-government controlled areas and to allow smooth and speedy delivery of humanitarian assistance in order to reduce the suffering of people. We share your regret that the Russian Federation Armed Forces have withdrawn their officers from the JCCC. The JCCC can play an essential role in the facilitation of the provision of security guarantees for repairs and maintenance of infrastructure. We therefore call again on the Russian Federation to return to the JCCC and on Russia and Ukraine to re-establish the functionality of the JCCC and to strengthen cooperation within its framework.

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 in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these fundamental principles and commitments must be restored. We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility and to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. We urge Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the armed formations, and we remain deeply concerned about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in areas held by armed formations. The duration of the European Union's economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, and calls 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 stabilise the situation and reverse moves that contravene these principles. We reiterate our strong condemnation of 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 and we will not recognise it. The European Union will remain committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.