



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°917 Vienna, 5 June 2019

EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

1. Mr. Chairman, since our last discussion in this Forum on the conflict, which is a consequence of acts of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the situation on the ground has unfortunately remained unchanged. The highly volatile security situation and the presence of Minsk-proscribed weapons and mines have serious negative repercussions on the lives of civilians. We underline in particular the dire conditions at entry-exit checkpoints where people have to wait for hours, are forced to stay overnight, and are exposed to shelling as recently occurred near Mariupol. The EU and its Member States reiterate their call on all sides to disengage, to withdraw heavy weapons and to step up efforts on demining in order to attain sustainable political solution to the conflict in line with OSCE principles and commitments.
2. Mr. Chairman, any impediments to the SMM's work, which continued over the past two weeks predominantly in areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations, are unacceptable. We are deeply concerned in particular about the systematic restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement by Russia-backed armed formations in areas of southern Donetsk and at the uncontrolled Ukraine-Russia state border. Since the beginning of 2019, the SMM's freedom of movement has been restricted at checkpoints in non-government-controlled areas of southern Donetsk region over 140 times. Such restrictions create blind spots for the SMM in an attempt to hide facts on the ground and raise the question what needs to be hidden from the eyes of the international community. We condemn the continued targeting and jamming of the SMM's technical assets. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.
3. Our position on the unjustified use of force by Russia at the Kerch Strait on 25 November 2018 and its negative impact in the Azov Sea and Russia's violations of international law is well known. We strongly call on Russia to immediately

release all the crew members and return their vessels unconditionally and without delay, which is also in accordance with the binding order of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea delivered on 25 May. We expect Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage through the Kerch Strait to and from the Azov Sea, in accordance with international law.

4. 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.
5. 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 negatively 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, 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.