



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°949
Vienna, 17 June 2020**

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chairperson, the European Union and its Member States remain concerned about the volatile security situation in eastern Ukraine. We highly appreciated the briefing by Chief Monitor, Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik last week. He noted a slight reprieve in ceasefire violations. We hope that this will constitute a reversal of the sad trend of the latest few months and will lead, at last, to the full, unlimited and comprehensive ceasefire that was agreed upon at the Normandy Summit in December 2019. As such, a ceasefire is indispensable for a peaceful solution to the conflict, it should remain the focus of the sides' negotiations in the Trilateral Contact Group. In this context, we recall our full support to the efforts of the Normandy Format and the TCG in working towards a sustainable political solution to the conflict, in full respect of the sovereignty, unity, independence and integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We commend the constructive approach displayed by Ukraine and call on Russia to act likewise, including within the TCG.

Ambassador Çevik highlighted in his briefing two major concerns that we fully share. They are not new and have been reiterated many times, by us and others, in this forum as well as the Permanent Council. Firstly, he drew again attention to the restrictions of the SMM's freedom of movement, introduced under the pretext of COVID-19 by the Russia-backed armed formations nearly three months ago. These restrictions constitute an impediment to the implementation of the SMM mandate. They continue to cause administrative, human resource and security challenges

for the Mission and are seriously threatening its effective functioning. Ambassador Cevik warned that the situation could become unsustainable in the next weeks. We reiterate that these restrictions are unacceptable as the SMM was set up as a single Mission with full access to the whole territory of Ukraine. It should not be broken up into separate parts. We call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to lift these undue restrictions and to implement the Minsk agreements.

Secondly, Ambassador Cevik stressed that the SMM continues to see its personnel and equipment targeted, with most incidents occurring in non-government-controlled areas. The safety and the security of the SMM should be of primary concern to all participating States. We underline the vital importance of the Mission's technical assets that enable it to effectively monitor the whole territory of Ukraine, especially in the eastern part. In this regard, we condemn the incident on 2 June when a new and expensive SMM camera system in the non-government-controlled area, near the Petrivske disengagement area, was intentionally destroyed by small arms fire from a close distance. We are strongly concerned about the Mission's significant reduction of capacity to monitor this disengagement area, which had seen an increase in incidents beforehand, and call on those responsible to refrain from attacks on the Mission's equipment. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

The relevance of technical assets was also shown in the night of 4-5 June, when an SMM long-range UAV observed convoys of trucks, some in military style, entering and exiting Ukraine on a dirt road, in a non-government-controlled area of the Luhansk region where there are no border crossing facilities. The SMM also observed two convoys on 5 June and two convoys on the night of 7-8 June standing near dirt roads close to the border with the Russian Federation where there are no border crossing facilities. This shows that the SMM is an invaluable source of information on what is really happening on the ground. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to ensure that the mandate of the SMM is respected, that the technical assets of the SMM are not damaged or destroyed and also to ensure that the relevant parts of the Ukrainian-Russian border are properly controlled on the Russian side, in order to support implementing the Minsk agreements.

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 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 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 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 the 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, 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.