



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°999 Vienna, 2 February 2022

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Mr Chair, the European Union and its Member States continue to monitor closely and with great concern Russia's ongoing military build-up around Ukraine, including on the territory of Belarus, and in the illegally annexed Crimea. These aggressive actions, combined with hostile rhetoric toward Ukraine are a challenge to all of us. We reiterate our call on Russia to de-escalate, to abide by international law and to choose a meaningful diplomatic path. We made it clear on multiple occasions that any further military aggression against Ukraine will have massive consequences and severe costs, including through a wide array of sectoral and individual restrictive measures, in close coordination with our partners.

Transparency of military exercises is critical, especially when the security situation is so tense. Last week we listened in this forum to the statements of our Belarusian and Russian colleagues on the upcoming exercises on the territory of Belarus in the vicinity of Ukraine's border. The information provided in this forum was unfortunately not adequate. We reaffirm that voluntary briefings cannot be a substitute for regular notification and invitations for observations which can be carried out under the Vienna Document even if, as according to the briefers, the respective ceilings are not reached. A stronger and honest engagement on military transparency is needed in order to mitigate threat perceptions and prevent further escalation. This situation underscores once again the urgency to modernise the OSCE politico-military toolbox, notably the Vienna Document.

We underline the importance of a renewed and substantial dialogue in line with the key principles that underpin European security. The OSCE is the most appropriate and inclusive platform to this effect. As stated in the EU Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions of 24 January, we stand ready to actively contribute to such a debate and address security concerns of all pS. We firmly support the Polish CiO's initiative to swiftly launch a specific process with a focus on military transparency, risk reduction, incident prevention, conflict management and non-military aspects of security.

Mr Chair, we fully support renewed international diplomatic efforts within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group, which are aimed at reaching a political solution to the conflict in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We call on both sides to implement the Minsk agreements in their entirety and underscore Russia's responsibility, as a party to the conflict, in this regard. We are encouraged by the renewed commitment of the sides, expressed at the last meeting of the N4 advisors in Paris on 26 January, to pursue discussions in the Normandy format towards the full implementation of the Minsk agreements and the observance of the ceasefire. The N4 advisors have also underlined the importance to intensify the work within the TCG. We hope for the resumption of the TCG meetings in person which should have a positive impact on the process.

We appreciate and commend the work of the monitors of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. We are grateful for the regular reporting and updates, including the most recent one by the Chief Monitor Amb. Cevik two days ago. We deplore that Russia continues to limit activities and the presence of the SMM in non-government controlled areas of Ukraine. Recurrent hostile rhetoric against the SMM, interference with its technical assets and unprecedented chronic restrictions to its freedom of movement in non-government controlled areas are unacceptable. Russia continues to blame Ukraine for the alleged build-up in Donbas. The SMM provides however another picture. Last week it reported again the presence of 57 Minsk-proscribed weapons beyond withdrawal lines and outside designated storage sites, out of which 56, i.e. 98% were in the area held by the Russia-backed armed formation. We urge the Russian Federation to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it

backs to ensure that all restrictions affecting the SMM work be lifted immediately and the Mission be provided with unrestricted access throughout Ukraine, in accordance with its mandate.

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, GEORGIA, 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.