



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°948 Vienna, 3 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 lack of implementation of the common agreed conclusions of the Normandy Summit last December, including the recommitment to a full and comprehensive ceasefire. Last month the SMM continued to report about an overall high level of ceasefire violations. The Mission also spotted a total of about 1,450 new mines in areas along the contact line, which confirms that eastern Ukraine remains one of the places most severely affected by mines and unexploded ordnance in the world and reminds us all of the urgency of agreeing further de-mining activities.

We strongly condemn the incidents that pose a serious risk to the health and life of the SMM monitors that are happening lately with a higher frequency. Last week many delegations raised in this forum the incidents in Berezivske on 15 and in Vesela Hora on 22 May (both in non-government-controlled area), the latter with small-arms fire passing about 10 metres above the heads of an SMM patrol. On 29 May, near Molodizhne (also in non-government-controlled area) an explosion occurred 100 meters from another SMM patrol. We recall that ensuring the safety and security of Mission staff and assets is a responsibility of all participating States.

We reiterate once again our strong concern about the restrictions of movement the SMM is facing in non-government-controlled areas under the pretext of the COVID-19 pandemic. We strongly condemn these restrictions, especially in the context of the continued flow of persons and transport across the segment of

Ukraine-Russia state border that is currently not under control of the Ukrainian government. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to meet the Minsk commitments in full and to stop this hindrance of the SMM to fulfil its mandate.

Furthermore, the situation in and around the disengagement areas is far from satisfactory. We recall that the 2016 TCG Framework Decision on disengagement contains clear conditions for disengagement. It is concerning that the commitments are not fully adhered to. The SMM continues to report the presence of armed formations, wearing JCCC armbands, in the disengagement zone at Stanytsia Luhanska or persons, mostly during evening and night hours inside the Zolote and Petrivske disengagement areas. The monitoring of the disengagement area near Petrivske poses a particular challenge as the SMM's abilities are strongly restricted by the presence of mines adjacent to access roads, small-arms fire and signal interference targeting SMM UAVs flying over and near the area. We also express our strong concerns about the ongoing fortification of positions belonging to the armed formations in that disengagement zone.

We recall the importance of the Mission's technical assets and regret the increase in reported incidents of signal interference or firing at UAVs. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

Mr. Chairperson, we firmly support the continued international diplomatic efforts in the Normandy process and at the Trilateral Contact Group. We hope that the representatives from Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE at the TCG will achieve tangible progress during the next meetings. We urge the sides to implement the commitments of the Minsk agreements, including those undertaken at the Normandy Summit on 9 December, in good faith. There is still a lot to be done. We echo the call by Ambassador Heidi Grau on the sides to take further actions to lower tensions. We take a positive note of the Ukraine's decision to increase its political representation at the TCG. In this context, we commend the Ukrainian leadership for their constructive approach and the political will to negotiate an end to the conflict and call on Russia to act likewise, including within the Trilateral Contact Group.

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, ALBANIA, 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.