



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°998 Vienna, 26 January 2022

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Mr Chair, the recent unprovoked, unjustified military build-up by Russia near its borders with Ukraine as well as in the illegally annexed Crimea are of the most serious concern. The deployment of Russian troops to Belarus, including near its border with Ukraine, is also extremely worrying. This is all accompanied by hostile rhetoric towards Ukraine and other destabilising actions.

The EU stands firmly with Ukraine in the face of this intimidating behaviour. This Monday, the EU Foreign Affairs Council called on Russia to cease its continued aggressive actions, to de-escalate, to abide by international law and to engage constructively in dialogue through the established international mechanisms. De-escalation is urgently needed in order to avoid the risk of incidents or provocations.

Mr. Chair, the EU foreign ministers also underlined the principle of indivisibility of European security. Russia's aggressive actions are a challenge to the whole European security order.

We are ready to engage in a renewed, genuine dialogue on enhancing security throughout the OSCE area. Our organisation provides the most appropriate mechanism and tools to that end. We support the Polish CiO's initiative in this regard. The dialogue should be conducted in full respect of the core non-negotiable principles which include notably the sovereign equality and territorial integrity of States; the inviolability of frontiers; refraining from the threat or use of force; and the freedom of States to choose or change their own security arrangements. A threatening show of force is not conducive to genuine dialogue.

Mr. Chair, we hope that ongoing diplomatic efforts this week will allow for progress on the path towards a political solution to the conflict in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We recall that the Trilateral Contact Group consists of representatives of Russia and Ukraine and the OSCE as the mediator. We urge Russia, as a party to the conflict, to engage constructively in the discussions within the Normandy format and the TCG and to implement the Minsk agreements in full.

We reiterate our full support to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, our eyes and ears on the ground. We commend its impartiality and transparency. Recurrent hostile rhetoric against the Mission, interference with its technical assets as well as the unprecedented restrictions to its freedom of movement by the Russia-backed armed formations are unacceptable. Since our last FSC discussion on the subject, 16 spot reports were issued by the Mission detailing 26 most serious cases of access denials or delays in non-government controlled areas. We urge Russia to respect the SMM mandate and ensure that all restrictions affecting its work be lifted immediately and the Mission be provided with unrestricted access throughout Ukraine.

A decrease in ceasefire violations over the holiday period, following the agreement in the TCG on 22 December 2021, was promising. However, last week the SMM again registered an upward trend. We call on the sides to adhere to the ceasefire arrangements and we continue to commend Ukraine for the restraint demonstrated by its military forces.

Mr Chair, the presence of Russian military equipment in the conflict zone is deeply worrying. The SMM continues to provide irrefutable proof in this regard. Last week the SMM sighted a surface-to-air missile system 9K33 Osa, nine multiple launch rocket system Grad BM-21 and a number of howitzers in non-government controlled areas, and within the withdrawal lines. We would appreciate clarifications from Russia how and why such Russia-made weapons appeared in Ukraine. We once again urge Russia to withdraw its weaponry from Ukraine, thus contributing to the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

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.

Mr. Chair, Ukraine has been defending its territorial integrity for almost eight years now. Let us not forget that, back in 2014, Ukraine was a country which was non-aligned and with security guarantees regarding its borders and territorial integrity. This did not prevent their violation by Russia. Any further military aggression against Ukraine will result in massive consequences and severe costs for Russia, including through restrictive measures coordinated with our partners.

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 align themselves with this statement.

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