



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°907 Vienna, 6 February 2019

EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chairman, another week has passed, marked by a volatile and unpredictable security situation in the conflict zone, civilian suffering and impediments to the SMM's work. The European Union and its Member States remain concerned by the ceasefire violations, including during maintenance works and despite explicit security guarantees, as well as the presence and use of Minsk-proscribed weapons, as reported by the SMM. We strongly condemn the continued shelling of civilian infrastructure, causing injuries, damage and resulting in disruption of basic services. Mr. Chairman, civilians bear the highest toll in the conflict. And let us emphasise: This regrettable situation is a consequence of Russia's acts of aggression against Ukraine, its illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula and destabilising actions in eastern Ukraine.

We once again stress the need to disengage, withdraw heavy weapons and step up efforts on comprehensive mine action, in order to ensure a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire as an important step toward a sustainable political solution to the conflict in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

Any impediments to the SMM's work and interference with the Mission's technical equipment are unacceptable. Over the last week (21-27 January) again, the vast majority of restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement occurred in areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations. The Russia-backed armed formations also continued to restrict the SMM's access at border crossing points in non-government-controlled areas of Luhansk region near the border with the Russian Federation. In the rare cases when the SMM was able to visit the uncontrolled Russian-Ukrainian state border outside government control, restrictions to its freedom of movement meant that, the SMM was able to conduct only limited monitoring there. These attempts to blind the SMM further add to our concerns.

We also deplore the incidents of 4 February near Zolote, in which SMM patrol mem-

bers heard three explosions, assessed as impacts, within 70-100 meters of their position. We condemn any impediments to the work of SMM and call for its safe and secure access throughout the area of its mandate.

We remain concerned about Russia's violations of international law in the Azov Sea and the Kerch Strait. We are dismayed at the use of force by Russia which, against the backdrop of increasing militarisation in the area, is unacceptable and we call strongly on Russia to release the captured vessels, their crew and equipment unconditionally and without delay.

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.

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 the security situation in the Black Sea region and beyond.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

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