



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°924 Vienna, 18 September 2019

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#### EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

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Mr. Chairman, the EU and its Member States welcome the overall improvement in the security situation in both Donetsk and Luhansk regions, including a significant drop in the number of ceasefire violations compared to the period before the ceasefire took effect. However, we remain concerned about the volatile situation in conflict areas and note a gradual deterioration, especially in well-known hotspots along the contact line, leading again to casualties. We urge the sides to build on the momentum of the recommitment to the ceasefire, disengagement in Stanytsia Luhanska and the exchange of detainees with a view to the full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Mr. Chairman, any impediment to the SMM's work, including attempts to destroy SMM's assets, which continue predominantly in areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations, are unacceptable. The SMM must have safe, secure, unconditional and unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine.

We reiterate our position on the unjustified use of force by Russia near the Kerch Strait on 25 November 2018, its negative impact in the Black and Azov seas and Russia's violations of international law. We call on Russia to return to Ukraine's custody the three vessels seized in the Black Sea on 25 November last year, in accordance with the binding order of the International Tribunal for the Law of Sea delivered on 25 May. We further call on Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage to and from the Sea of Azov, in accordance with international law.

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. Re-

spect 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 REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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