



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°957
Vienna, 7 October 2020**

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Madame Chair, the European Union and its Member States welcome the improvement of the security situation in eastern Ukraine. This is a result of the ceasefire which, despite attempts to undermine it, has been largely holding since 27 July, already for 72 days as of today. This in itself is a highly positive and unprecedented development in the history of this conflict that should be used to give impetus for further progress.

At the same time, we are concerned that the SMM continues to register spikes in ceasefire violations. Although they are still well below the level of the pre-commitment period, they show how potentially fragile the ceasefire is and how easily it can be put at risk. Therefore, we particularly appreciate the restrained approach shown by Ukraine, and reiterate our call on the sides to keep their commitment to the ceasefire and to refrain from actions that could jeopardise it. We also wish to underline the crucial importance of a functioning coordination mechanism for responding to ceasefire violations and preventing possible future escalations and in this context we call on Russia to return to the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination.

We fully support continued 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 recall the need for confidentiality in political negotiations as sensitive as those within the TCG. We appreciate Ukraine's constructive approach and political will to negotiate a sustainable end to this conflict and call on Russia to reciprocate.

We repeat our call for further progress with regard to the disengagement areas, new entry-exit crossing points, de-mining and the exchange of detainees. It is essential that the ICRC be finally granted access to the detainees in the non-government controlled area. We recall that this is one of the many commitments of the Normandy Four Summit in December that still await their implementation.

The Special Monitoring Mission should have, in accordance with its mandate, unhindered access to the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, including Crimea. We remain concerned by the continuing restrictions on its freedom of movement, which occur predominantly in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations, in particular in those adjacent to the Ukraine-Russia State border outside the control of the Ukrainian government. We reiterate that all impediments to the SMM's work, including attempts to destroy SMM's assets, are unacceptable. We urge Russia to use its considerable and undeniable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to remove all restrictions on the SMM and the use of its assets.

Our position on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine is well-known. We have strongly condemned, also in this forum, the construction of the Kerch bridge, without the consent of Ukraine, which constituted another violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity by Russia and limited free passage of ships to the Ukrainian ports in the Azov Sea. The European Union remains committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy of the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula, including through restrictive measures. Therefore, the Council of the European Union expanded last week the list of persons and entities subject to restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. Two individuals and four entities were added to the list in light of their role in the construction of the Kerch bridge.

In conclusion, 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 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

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