



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°962
Vienna, 25 November 2020

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Madame Chair, the current security situation represents without doubt a big step forward compared to what we had only four months ago, before 27 July. The sides remain largely adhered to the ceasefire despite occasional provocations which continue to cause casualties among Ukrainian military personnel, for example last Thursday near Avdiivka. We reiterate our call to refrain from actions that would jeopardise the current relative calm at the line of contact. In this context, we appreciate the principled Ukrainian position not to respond to provocations and its determination to uphold the ceasefire.

The improvement of the security situation has not, regretfully, translated into tangible results on many other tracks within the Trilateral Contact Group, despite readiness shown by Ukraine. We are still waiting to see all the EECPs fully open, including the new ones in Zolote and Shchastia. We commend Ukraine for its decision to reopen all EECPs and we see no justification for the other side's refusal to do likewise, in line with the agreement found at the N4 Summit and at the TCG.

We recall that there are many other commitments of the Normandy Four Summit that also await their implementation. Ukraine reiterated its readiness to move ahead with four new disengagement areas and 19 de-mining zones. We regret that the other side of the conflict has blocked progress and as a result now, with the ground frozen, any new meaningful de-mining work is practically impossible.

We still hope to see progress on ICRC access to the detainees in the non-government controlled area and on the exchange of detainees. Those kept in detention, often for long periods, should be able to re-join their families in time for the festive period at the end of the year.

We call on Russia to demonstrate a constructive approach in the TCG and the Normandy format. We regret to see ever new pretexts being raised to hinder further progress, such as local elections or more recently, the action plan proposed by Ukraine. It is high time to move ahead in a more constructive spirit.

We highly value the work on the ground of the Special Monitoring Mission. The SMM must have, in accordance with its mandate, unhindered access to the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, including Crimea. We remain concerned about 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. This is why we have decided to support the respective Ministerial Council draft decision that is now co-sponsored by 34 OSCE participating States. We call on all pS to constructively engage in the negotiations on this draft with a view to its adoption at the Tirana Ministerial Council. 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.

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*, 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.