



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°955
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EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Madame Chairperson, the European Union and its Member States welcome the largely holding ceasefire in eastern Ukraine. The SMM continues to report on a relatively calm situation with much lower levels of ceasefire violation in the conflict area, including days of no violations, e.g. on 9, 12 and 15 September. This brought a significant decrease of casualties among military personnel and the civilian population, but has not stopped them altogether. We urge the sides to keep their commitments to the ceasefire and refrain from actions that could put it at risk. In this context, we appreciate the restrained approach shown by Ukraine earlier this month.

The current situation gives reasons for cautious optimism. This should be used for further progress in the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. We recall that the Minsk agreements remain the only framework for the peaceful settlement of this conflict with the aim of restoring the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. The Minsk Protocol states that the Trilateral Contact Group is composed of representatives from Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE with the latter in the role of chair. It is important that all participants of the TCG fully assume their responsibilities and engage in the talks in good faith. We commend Ukraine for its constructive approach and for having the political will to negotiate a sustainable political solution to this conflict and call on Russia to act likewise. We would also like to underline the importance of the confidentiality of the talks.

The continuing commitment to the ceasefire is a good starting point for further work. We were deeply saddened by the SMM report last week registering four new cases of civilian casualties, victims of explosives. We urge the sides to redouble the efforts with a view to a swift implementation of a new de-mining plan. It is essential to achieve as much progress as possible in this area before the start of the winter complicates these efforts.

We also repeat our call for further progress with regard to the disengagement areas and the exchange of detainees. On the latter, we regret that the ICRC has still not been granted access to the detainees in the non-government controlled area. We recall that this was one of the commitments of the Normandy Four Summit in December that has still to be implemented.

The SMM should have full access to the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. This is still not the case. In the weekly report, issued on 15 September, the SMM informed about another 16 incidents of restricting its freedom of movement, all but one occurring in non-government-controlled area. We note with regret that in particular the Mission's access to the areas adjacent to the Ukraine-Russia State border outside the control of the Ukrainian government remains severely restricted.

All impediments to the SMM's work, including attempts to destroy SMM's assets, are unacceptable. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially. 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 its assets.

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 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.