



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chairperson, we deeply regret that still today international law and fundamental principles of the OSCE continue to be violated in Europe. The most striking example is the conflict, to which we will speak today, as we do it every week. This conflict has already entered its seventh year, has cost more than 13.000 lives and the high human toll continues to rise on an almost daily basis.

We were saddened to see in the SMM weekly report of two weeks ago a 40% increase in ceasefire violations and a 15% increase the week after. And this sad trend continues with the weekly report issued this morning noting another 40% increase. A comprehensive ceasefire is more than ever urgent. We are particularly concerned by the dramatic increase in civilian casualties, including children, due to the sharp rise in ceasefire violations, noted at the beginning of this month. According to the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, the first week of May saw the highest figure of civilian casualties for the last two years. This worrying trend needs to be reversed. We call on the sides to take all precautionary measures to protect civilians, to refrain from placing their military positions, weapons and personnel in residential areas or next to civilian infrastructure, and to recommit to the ceasefire which would be the best way to prevent any future escalation. We hope that this week's meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group can make substantial progress on these issues.

Mr. Chairperson, the EU and its Member States fully support efforts of the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy Format in working towards a sustainable political solution to the conflict, in full respect of the sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. It is therefore important that the sides take the necessary steps to implement the agreed conclusions of the Paris N4 Summit of December in good faith, notably recommitment to full and comprehensive ceasefire, and bring their discussions on other issues, such as further release of detainees, agreement on new disengagement areas and EECPs, as well as de-mining activities to a positive conclusion. In this context, the EU commends the constructive approach displayed by Ukraine and calls on Russia to act likewise, including within the TCG.

We will never tire of underlining, also in this forum, the importance of an unhindered, unrestricted and unconditional freedom of movement for the SMM. This is imperative for the Mission's capacity to continue to provide us with reliable information on the situation on the ground. However, the denials of access continue unabated. In the last weekly report, dated 3 May, the SMM noted 28 such cases, all but two occurring in non-government-controlled areas. Eleven of these restrictions were linked to the pretext of COVID-19 outbreak. We strongly condemn these restrictions and recall that they constitute a violation of the mandate of the Mission and run against provisions of the Minsk agreements. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to meet the Minsk commitments in full and to stop this hindrance of the SMM to fulfil its mandate.

We strongly deplore all attempts to impede the work of the SMM and its monitors. The incident that occurred on 8 May in Horlivka (non-government-controlled), as described in the Spot Report 22/2020, was particularly worrisome and unacceptable. Five members of the Mission were harassed, intimidated and hindered from leaving their location for almost three hours. We also recall the importance of the Mission's technical assets, even more so during the current circumstances, for the SMM's ability to implement its mandate. Those responsible for any wilful damage,

destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

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 the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, 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.

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