



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°963 Vienna, 9 December 2020

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Madame Chair, exactly one year after the leaders of the Normandy format agreed in Paris on steps to advance the settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, we look back on a year of some progress. However, the picture that we have before our eyes, compels us to admit that more could have been done.

The adoption of the additional ceasefire measures in July represented an undeniable breakthrough, leading to a first tangible improvement in many years of the security situation on the ground. This is something that we have repeatedly welcomed in this Forum. Sadly, persisting ceasefire violations and casualties, although well below previous levels, have continued to cast a shadow on this achievement. Last week, we were saddened to learn that the SMM had confirmed the first two civilian casualties due to shelling since July 27. It is imperative that the sides exercise maximum restraint in order not to derail the hard-fought progress.

Madame Chair, a stable ceasefire constitutes but the first step towards the implementation of other vital political, security and humanitarian commitments. The sides clearly shared this understanding when in the TCG, back in July, they provisionally designated four new disengagement areas, 19 demining zones and also a date for the opening of two additional EECs in the Luhansk region. Ukraine has consistently demonstrated its determination to move forward. We call

on Russia, as a party to the TCG and the Normandy format, to reciprocate this stance. It is high time to move ahead in a more constructive spirit.

We also wish to recall that one year ago at the Paris summit agreement was reached to work towards the mutual release of the detainees based on the formula “all for all” and that the ICRC should have full access to detainees, including in non-government-controlled areas. We welcome the previous releases of conflict-related detainees and call for progress in this regard before the end of the year.

Madame Chair, international organisations’ full access to non-government-controlled areas would also enable the delivery of genuine humanitarian aid to the local population. We deplore that Russian so-called “humanitarian” convoys continue to enter Ukraine illegally via the Donetsk Border Crossing Point, as once again recorded on November 26 by the OSCE Border Observer Mission. We regret that, again, this occurred without a full inspection by the Ukrainian border guards and in violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. This does little to allay concerns about the possible military nature of the transported cargo, especially as SMM UAVs for the second time this month spotted in the non-government controlled area a piece of Russia’s latest electronic warfare system, this time a “*Zhitel*” jamming station. We would be interested in learning from the Russian delegation how such a sophisticated military equipment turned up on the territory of Ukraine.

In light of such reports, we remain concerned about the continuing restrictions imposed on the SMM’s freedoms of movement, in particular in areas adjacent to the Ukraine-Russia State border outside the control of the Ukrainian government. Ensuring the SMM’s full and safe access throughout the entire territory of Ukraine, including to the Crimean peninsula, is yet another commitment reconfirmed at the Paris summit which to this day awaits implementation. We therefore reiterate our call on Russia to use its considerable and undeniable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to remove all limitations to the SMM’s work.

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.