



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1258 Vienna, 6 February 2020

EU Statement in response to the Update by the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson in Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Grau and to the Report by the Chief Monitor of the OSCE SMM to Ukraine, Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik

Mr. Chairperson, the European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Heidi Grau for the first time to the Permanent Council since she was assigned to be Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson in Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group. We look forward to cooperating with you and wish you all the best in this crucial task. We also welcome Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik back to the Permanent Council and thank you for once again presenting us with a substantial report.

We are grateful to you, Ambassador Grau, for your briefing about the meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group held on 29 January 2020. Eight weeks after the Normandy Summit in Paris on 9 December 2019, we would welcome substantial steps towards implementing the conclusions reached at the Summit. Therefore, we note positively that implementation was the main focus of this TCG meeting.

At the same time, we regret the fact that, although the number of ceasefire violations in the beginning of January remained slightly below last year's average level, the number of civilian casualties, as well as fatalities of the Ukrainian servicemen, has sharply increased since the end of last year. The situation on the ground is therefore far from the full, unlimited and comprehensive ceasefire that

was agreed upon at the Normandy Summit and reaffirmed in the Trilateral Contact Group meeting on 18 December 2019.

In light of last year's progress in the three disengagement areas in Stanytsia Luhanska, Zolote and Petrivske, the European Union welcomes that the Security Working Group of the TCG discussed further possible disengagement areas. This, together with demining activities, is important as it enables a safe and secure freedom of movement of the civilian population living near the contact line. The European Union also would like to echo the plea of Ambassador Grau for full and unconditional access of the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as other international organisations, to all detained persons, as agreed by the Normandy Four leaders.

We are grateful to the SMM for its active involvement in the monitoring and verification of the disengagement process. At the same time, we are concerned about the reported ceasefire violations inside the existing disengagement areas, in particular inside the Petrivske area, but also recently in the other disengagement areas where armed formations are still present, including some wearing armbands with JCCC written on them. In this regard, we call on Russia to use the considerable influence it has on the armed formations it backs to see the commitments agreed upon in the Normandy Summit fully respected. We once again urge the sides to adhere to the TCG agreement on disengagement. The TCG framework decision on disengagement of September 2016 must be respected.

On a political level, we support continued efforts of the TCG in working towards a sustainable political solution of the conflict, in full respect of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine. It is therefore important that the sides take considerable steps to implement the agreed conclusions in good faith. In this context, the EU commends the constructive approach displayed by Ukraine and calls on Russia to act likewise.

Ambassador Çevik, the European Union highly values the work on the ground and the reporting by the SMM. The safety and security of all women and men serving in the SMM are of primary importance. We remain concerned about the continued restrictions of the SMM's freedom of movement, particularly in non-government-controlled areas of southern Donetsk region and near the border with the Russian

Federation. We once again deplore the targeting of SMM assets, including SMM UAVs, by means of signal interference and small arms fire. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially. The SMM must have safe, secure, unconditional and unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine in line with its mandate. This includes the illegally annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and along the Ukraine-Russia state border, to which the SMM is systematically denied access by Russia-backed armed formations.

We once again reaffirm our strong support to the SMM and reiterate our commitment to back the Mission in every possible way, including financially and by providing qualified staff and appropriate equipment. We call on all participating States to make efforts in order to close the funding gap and engage in an appropriate financing of the mission. We commend those participating States who have already made substantial contributions.

The presence of more than 1,400 mines on both sides of the contact line and the fact that new mines have been laid, in clear violation of existing commitments, including on places close to checkpoints and the entry-exit checkpoints used by civilians and the SMM, is highly alarming. Four of the seven civilian casualties registered by the SMM between 18 November 2019 and 16 January 2020 were due to the detonation of mines and unexploded ordnance. Ambassador Çevik, you report again that the requests by the SMM to remove mines and unexploded ordnance near the Petrivske disengagement area have been refused. It is evident that the commitment on de-mining must be implemented as a matter of priority, and an updated de-mining plan with new priority areas must be developed, in line with the Normandy Summit conclusions.

We welcome the fact that civilian crossing over the Stanytsia Luhanska Bridge has been made easier since the opening of the new section of the bridge on 20 November 2019. Still, there are exceedingly long queues at checkpoints of the armed formations in non-government-controlled Olenivka and Horlivka, and at the EECs near government-controlled Maiorsk and near Marinka. As you report, these queues "expose civilians to the risk of small-arms fire, shelling and hazards posed by mines and UXO". It is therefore vital to improve the process at the checkpoints in the interest of the thousands of people who are crossing them every

day. We reiterate our call for the opening of new crossing points, based primarily on humanitarian criteria.

The EU remains firm in its 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. We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility in this regard and to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. We again call on Russia to immediately stop fuelling the conflict by providing financial and military support to the armed formations, and we remain deeply concerned about the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations. The duration of the European Union's economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to uphold 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. The European Union will remain committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

The Candidate Countries of the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA* and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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