



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°954
Vienna, 16 September 2020

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Madame Chairperson, the European Union and its Member States welcome the agreement on additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire. Since their entry into force on 27 July the security situation in eastern Ukraine has visibly improved. In the last few weeks we saw reports by the Special Monitoring Mission on days with no ceasefire violations at all; a positive picture that was so hard to imagine some months ago.

A lasting ceasefire is vital for a sustainable political solution to the conflict, which can only be reached through the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. We once again urge the sides to comply with the commitments they have signed up to. We fully support continued international diplomatic efforts within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. In this context, we commend Ukraine for its constructive approach and political will to negotiate an end to this conflict and call on Russia to reciprocate.

The comprehensive and unlimited ceasefire is a major achievement that should be preserved. We are concerned by recent incidents that resulted in casualties among Ukrainian military personnel and condemn threats by the Russia-backed armed formations to resort to violence. We particularly condemn the incident on September 10 near Shumy, when and where the inspection, as agreed in the extraordinary meeting of TCG of September 9, was about to take place. We call on all sides to exercise restraint and seek solutions via the TCG as demonstrated by the Ukrainian

side. This situation underscores once more the need for a functioning coordination mechanism for responding to ceasefire violations and diverging security assessments by the sides. We reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to return to the JCCC.

The ceasefire offers a welcome respite to the civilian population that have borne the brunt of this long-lasting conflict. As reported by the SMM, since 27 July there have been no civilian casualties due to shelling or small-arms fire. Still, there have been tragic incidents involving explosive objects, grenades or mines. This reminds us of the continued threat posed to civilians by mines and unexploded ordinance. We hope that the agreement on an updated demining plan will be swiftly implemented.

As a staunch supporter of the SMM, we welcome the fact that the Mission's personnel have been able to cross the contact line and return to the non-government-controlled areas to resume monitoring activities. However, challenges still remain. We recall our position that the SMM should have full access to the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. All impediments to the SMM's work, most of which occur in the non-government controlled areas, including attempts to destroy SMM's assets, are unacceptable. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets, including monitoring cameras in Petrivske, Vesele and Shyrokyne, should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

We are also concerned about the presence of people inside the disengagement areas in Stanytsia Luhanska, Zolote and Petrivske, during evening and night hours, and that the SMM has still a very limited monitoring capability in Zolote and Petrivske. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to remove all remaining restrictions on the SMM and its assets, and to respect the agreements concerning the disengagement areas.

Madame Chairperson, since our last discussion on the subject in this Forum, the OSCE Border Observer Mission in Gukovo and Donetsk reported two so-called "humanitarian" Russian convoys entering Ukrainian territory on 30 July and 27 August respectively. We regret that, again, this occurred without a full inspection by the Ukrainian border guards and in violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial

integrity. This does little to allay concerns about the possible military nature of the transported cargo.

We recall the existence of international mechanisms for the delivery of genuine humanitarian aid. Only last week, UNHCR and ICRC each sent 10 trucks of humanitarian aid for the benefit of the population in the non-government controlled areas.

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.