



EUROPEAN UNION

81st Joint PC – FSC Meeting Vienna, 14 April 2021

EU Statement on the Unusual Military Activities of the Russian Federation

The European Union and its Member States welcome the convening of this Joint PC – FSC meeting by the Swedish and Armenian Chairs at the request of the delegation of Ukraine. Such discussion on the security concerns about the ongoing unusual military activities of the Russian Federation in the areas adjacent to the state border of Ukraine and in the illegally annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol is indeed urgently needed.

We are following very closely and with severe concern the worsening of the security situation in eastern Ukraine and Russian troop movements towards and at its border with Ukraine and in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. We urge the Russian Federation to take the necessary steps to de-escalate the situation and to engage in a meaningful dialogue and constructive consultations. We have all signed up to the Vienna Document precisely to reduce military risks and misperceptions and to improve understanding of threat perceptions and build trust among participating States. It constitutes a key element of our common security. We, therefore, fully supported Ukraine's request to activate the consultation mechanism as foreseen in paragraph 16 under the risk reduction Chapter of the Vienna Document.

We took note of the explanations provided on Friday by the Russian Federation, which can hardly be considered satisfactory since they do not provide relevant information to explain the activities in question and dispel the concerns.

The refusal of the Russian Federation to engage in a meaningful dialogue in the meeting last Saturday was regrettable and does not contribute to efforts to de-escalate. We, therefore, call Russia to engage in good faith on the basis of its OSCE politico-military commitments.

The concern is about unusual military activities of the Russian troops at the border and in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula which take place at a time when the level of violence in eastern Ukraine has also increased. The SMM notes in its recent weekly report an almost three-fold increase of ceasefire violations for the second consecutive week. The rising numbers of ceasefire violations and casualties and fatalities among the civilian population and the Ukrainian military personnel at well-known hotspots are highly worrying. When transparency and mutual confidence are in short supply, any provocation or the spread of disinformation can have dire consequences.

Ukrainians on both sides of the line of contact have seen enough of human suffering. The N4 Summit in Paris and the recommitment to the ceasefire in July of last year have offered hope for progress on the way to a peaceful solution. The EU welcomes the important steps Ukraine, under President Zelenskyy's leadership, has taken in this regard. We regret that an extraordinary meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group on 7 April did not result in the renewal of the ceasefire commitments of 22 July 2020 by all sides since the Russian Federation refused to engage constructively. We call upon the sides to refrain from actions and rhetoric that lead to heightened tensions and to step up instead their efforts in implementing the Minsk agreements. In particular, we urge the Russian Federation to provide full transparency on its military activities which are a matter of strong concern for other participating States.

We recall our principled position that the full implementation of the Minsk agreements is the only way forward. We strongly support the efforts of both the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group to find a peaceful resolution of the conflict, in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. The work of the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine is of crucial importance and we call on Russia to ensure that the Mission has full freedom of movement within Ukraine, which has never been the case due to restrictions

imposed by the Russia-backed armed formations, including the targeting and intensive jamming of its UAVs and denial of access or passage at their checkpoints.

In conclusion, we reiterate 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, together with our partners, will continue to closely monitor the situation and react decisively to any further violations of these principles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As regards measures for clarifying the situation as well as halting activities that give rise to concern, the European Union and its Member States recommend to use all relevant provisions under the Vienna Document and other CSBMs to the fullest, and in particular:

- to the Russian Federation to take steps to de-escalate the situation and to engage in a meaningful dialogue and constructive consultations;
- to the Russian Federation to provide, in accordance with its commitments under the Vienna Document, full transparency on its military activities, in particular on the fundamental questions concerning the size and structure of permanent stationed troops in the respective areas and of additional transferred troops involved in the combat training and the duration of their deployment;
- to the Russian Federation to voluntarily host a visit to dispel concerns about its military activities, in accordance with the provisions under paragraph 18 of the Vienna Document 2011.
- to continue discussing this particular issue at the PC and/or FSC;
- that participating States involved continue to regularly brief the FSC, in particular on military activities in border areas.

Madam Chair, I kindly request that these recommendations and our statement today be attached to the Journal of the Day.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, 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.