



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°985
Vienna, 15 September 2021**

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chair, the EU and its Member States will continue to speak up, including in this forum, against Russia's illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and the ongoing acts of aggression in eastern Ukraine. We will not abate in condemning this blatant breach of international law and of the OSCE principles and commitments which are fundamental to the European security order. The chapter on Crimea is not closed. We will staunchly enforce our non-recognition policy of the illegal annexation of the peninsula. We will also continue to support international initiatives aimed at the restoration of Ukrainian sovereignty over the Crimean Peninsula, including the International Crimea Platform launched last month.

We reiterate our full support for the Minsk agreements and 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. We congratulate and wish good luck to Ambassador Mikko Kinnunen as the new Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the TCG. We call on Russia, as party to the conflict, to show a constructive approach in these negotiations and in the implementation of all the respective provisions of Minsk agreements, as well as Normandy Summit and TCG decisions it has committed to.

We are convinced that, with political will on both sides, progress can be achieved. We saw it in the run-up to the 2019 Normandy Summit in Paris, as well as last year in July with the re-commitment to the ceasefire and agreement on additional measures. It substantially reduced ceasefire violations and the resulting casualties, but did not stop them altogether. The human toll is still too high and unfortunately rising again. Only

this year the SMM confirmed 62 civilian casualties, including 15 fatalities, most of them were victims of mines and other explosive devices. Ukraine's armed forces reported more than 50 soldiers killed in action in the same period. Just last weekend, three Ukrainian soldiers were killed and 13 wounded due to targeted shelling. This is yet another illustration of the devastating effect of the recent trend, as underlined in the informal briefing by the SMM last Friday, of increased shelling with heavy weapons, resulting in losses of human lives and damage to the civilian infrastructure.

We highly value the work of the Special Monitoring Mission and condemn all impediments to its work, most of which occur in the non-government controlled areas. We recall our position that the SMM should have full and unconditional access to the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, including Crimea. We urge the Russian Federation to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to ensure that all undue restrictions on the SMM are removed.

Transparency, including at the areas near the Ukrainian-Russian State border currently not under control by the Ukrainian government, is of essence. We are deeply disappointed by the announcement made by the Russian Federation not to agree to extend the mandate of the Border Observation Mission beyond 30 September, even though border monitoring is provided for by the Minsk Protocol of 5 September 2014. Russia's decision to discontinue the Mission's operations after having imposed significant limitations since its establishment is of deep concern for the EU.

This happens at the time when the SMM is systematically being denied access to the border areas in non-government-controlled areas. The flights of SMM's long-range UAVs have been suspended for more than two months now, following incidents of increased signal jamming and forced landings. We call on the sides to give all the security guarantees so that the Mission can carry out its monitoring without impediments. In this regard, the long-range UAVs flights should resume as soon as possible. We recall that in the recent past long-range UAVs delivered indisputable proofs of illegal crossing of military supplies from Russia through the uncontrolled segment of the border. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

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 the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and 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.