



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°920
Vienna, 10 July 2019**

EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

The EU and its Member States welcome the process of disengagement in Stanytsia Luhanska. We commend the SMM for its active involvement in facilitating this process. We also welcome the fact that the SMM has recorded no ceasefire violations inside Stanytsia Luhanska recently as well as no ceasefire violations inside the Petrivske disengagement area. Regrettably, the security situation inside and near the Zolote disengagement area remains volatile. We underline that disengagement is an important step in the implementation of the commitments undertaken with regard to the TCG's Framework Decision on Disengagement of Forces and Hardware of 21 September 2016. We call on all sides to take all necessary steps for the successful completion of this process and to ensure its long term sustainability. We urge the Russian Federation to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to this end.

We remain concerned about the volatile security situation in the areas of conflict, which is a consequence of acts of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. We deplore the laying of new mines as reported by the recent SMM reports and reiterate our call on all sides to step up efforts on comprehensive mine action. We are deeply saddened that shelling, gunfire and unexploded ordnances continue to pose a serious threat to the lives of civilians as well as causing damage to homes and critical infrastructure. We appeal to all sides to finalize the discussion in the framework of the TCG on the so called 'harvest ceasefire', and to adhere to it fully.

Mr. Chairman, it is deeply worrying, that the SMM continues to face restrictions to its freedom of movement and other impediments in the fulfilment of its mandate, which occur predominantly in areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations. We deplore that the Mission's safety continues to be endangered. On 4 July small-arms rounds from North-North-West position were fired in the direction of the SMM patrol in the Zolote disengagement area posing a direct threat to Mission's members. We underline that the SMM must have unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including to the uncontrolled Ukraine-Russia state border and to areas in its vicinity. We deplore the fact that in the last week SMM UAVs encountered signal interference on an almost daily basis and were subjected to regular small arms fire. We condemn the fact that one mini-UAV was lost in the Zolote disengagement area. Endangering monitors or their equipment is unacceptable and such incidents must be investigated fully. Ensuring the safety and security of Mission staff and assets is a responsibility of all participating States.

Our position on the unjustified use of force by Russia at the Kerch Strait on 25 November 2018 and its negative impact in the Azov Sea and Russia's violations of international law is well known. We strongly call on Russia to immediately release all 24 crew members and return their vessels unconditionally and without delay, which is also in accordance with the binding order of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea delivered on 25 May. We expect Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage through the Kerch Strait to and from the Azov Sea, in accordance with international law.

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 regarding information 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 express our deep concern about the ongoing large-scale militarisation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia, which continues to impact negatively 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 LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA 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.