



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°975 Vienna, 12 May 2021

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#### **EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine**

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Mr. Chair, let me underline at the outset the importance of a faithful implementation of the OSCE principles and commitments. In this context, we recall our support to Ukraine's activation of the Risk Reduction Mechanism under the Vienna Document against the background of a military build-up along its borders and in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula and deplore that Russia chose not to engage meaningfully under this mechanism. We look forward to the announced VD visits in Russia. We also recall questions and recommendations put forward by many pS, and urge Russia to provide comprehensive answers, including via briefings to this Forum and within the Working Group "A" and to take action on the recommendations. A reference to the website of the Ministry of Defence can hardly be considered a satisfactory response.

These escalatory actions by Russia were of a particular concern. They were accompanied by an intensified disinformation campaign against Ukraine and an increased level of ceasefire violations along the contact line. Following the announcement of the withdrawal of some Russian troops, we hope that the overall decrease in ceasefire violations, as observed by the SMM for the second consecutive week, will continue despite recent local escalations and further military casualties. We recall that ensuring lasting security on the ground is critical for further steps in the settlement of this conflict. In addition, we urge the sides to implement all the

commitments of the Normandy Summit of December 2019, and in particular the demining plans in order to reduce the risks of mines and explosive ordnance, still the biggest threat to the civilian population in the conflict zone.

The SMM mandate, as agreed by all OSCE pS and recalled in the conclusions of the Paris Summit, specifies that the mission shall have safe and secure access throughout the entire territory of Ukraine. Since most restrictions on the SMM happen in regions outside the Ukrainian government's control, we call on Russia to use the considerable influence it has over the armed formations it backs to ensure the mission's freedom of movement. We underline that this is a question of political will.

The situation on the ground is regrettably quite different from what we wished to see. The restrictions on the freedom of movement of the SMM continue to rise, with an overwhelming majority occurring in non-government controlled areas. SMM cameras are being tinkered with by the Russia-backed armed formations. The number of jamming cases of UAVs has increased dramatically, as we saw it for example in last week's SMM report. This increased signal interference already caused crashes of the long-range UAVs in the past months and on 6 May another UAV was forced to conduct an emergency landing. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

The UAVs are indeed an essential part of SMM operations, especially at night and in areas where Mission's monitoring and freedom of movement are restricted. They provide the pS with information about activities on the ground, which include evidence of Russia's support to the armed formations, such as images of convoys crossing the uncontrolled segment of the Ukraine-Russia State border, very often at night and in areas with no border crossing infrastructure, or reports on the presence of the sophisticated Russian military equipment. These include for example a 51U6 Kasta-21 target and acquisition radar spotted near non-government controlled Buhaivka on 15 February and 15 new Russian-made UAZ Esaul armoured vehicles spotted near non-government controlled Oleksandrivske on 14 April.

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 Russia's actions to block access to parts of the Black Sea, including near illegally-annexed Crimea and the Kerch Strait, and 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 and 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.