



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°995 Vienna, 8 December 2021

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States have and will always stand with Ukraine and support its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the aspirations of its people for a free, democratic and prosperous country. Exactly thirty years ago, on 8 December 1991, in the Belavezha forest, the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus put their signatures to a document that marked the beginning of the final stage of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Certainly, one of the most significant events of the second half of the 20th century. A week earlier, on 1 December, an overwhelming majority of Ukrainians (more than 92%) voted yes in the referendum on the act of independence. In the following days recognitions of independence of Ukraine started to flow in from all around the world, including from the President of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, Boris Yeltsin. We are saddened to see that Russia has in recent years walked away from its respect for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity in words and in deeds. Russia's acts of aggression since 2014 and the illegal annexation of a territory of another sovereign State were and still are a blatant breach of international law, of bilateral and multilateral agreements signed by Russia, including the Budapest Memorandum, and of the fundamental principles of this Organisation. These violations deserve our condemnation and will not be accepted.

Looking back at this year, we note a clear worrying upward trend of increasing tensions in the conflict zone and in the region. At the beginning of the year, the additional ceasefire measures of July 2020 were still largely adhered to. In April this year, we saw the military build-up of the Russian forces at the Ukrainian borders and in illegally annexed Crimea and the refusal by Russia to provide the necessary explanations under the Vienna Document. Ceasefire violations and obstructions to the SMM's

freedom of movement, including the blocking of monitors in their lodgings and the jamming of long-range UAVs, were on the rise. The much needed transparency of the border segment that is temporarily not under the control of the Ukrainian government suffered another setback in September when Russia blocked the extension of the OSCE Border Observer Mission in Gukovo and Donetsk. Recently, levels of ceasefire violations were in some weeks even higher than before July 2020 when the additional measures entered into force. In the last two weeks we also witnessed on an almost daily basis the blocking of crossings of the SMM patrols from government controlled areas into those held by the Russia-backed armed formations, in particular in Luhansk region. This all was accompanied by an enhanced hostile rhetoric by Russia's public figures vis-à-vis Ukraine and reports of another Russian military build-up at the borders.

Tomorrow, we will mark the second anniversary of the signature of the Common Agreed Conclusions at the Paris Normandy Summit. Most of the agreed measures are still not implemented, be it the comprehensive ceasefire, free movement of the SMM, an updated demining plan, additional disengagement areas, opening of new EECs, exchange of all detainees based on the principle "all for all" and the unconditional access by ICRC to detainees. We call for the full implementation of the N4 Paris Summit Conclusions and more constructive engagement in the Trilateral Contact Group. Ukraine has demonstrated its willingness to move ahead on these issues. We call on the other side to do likewise.

We fully support international diplomatic efforts to find a political solution to the conflict in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We call on Russia, as a party to this conflict, to seize this opportunity. Political will and re-engagement in negotiations as well as transparency are needed, not sabre-rattling and hostile rhetoric which increase the risk of confrontation. In this context, we reiterate the right of every sovereign State to freely choose the course of its foreign and security policy, as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Europe.

We regret that at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Stockholm it was again not possible to agree on the declaration on the OSCE efforts towards peace with respect to Ukraine, as well as on the decision on the OSCE permanent monitoring and verification of the

areas adjacent to the Ukrainian-Russian state border that are temporarily not under control of the Government of Ukraine. Both documents enjoyed a very large support by participating States, but their adoption was again blocked by the Russian Federation.

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 and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.