



## EUROPEAN UNION

# OSCE Annual Security Review Conference Vienna 31 August 2021

## Special Session: Ensuring security and stability in the OSCE region in the light of developments with respect to Ukraine

**Final Final (1369 words)**

1. Madame Chair, at the outset of this meeting, let us reiterate our condemnation of Russia's illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and its continuous acts of aggression in eastern Ukraine. These acts are a blatant breach of international law and of the OSCE principles and commitments which are fundamental to the European Security Order. We thank the Swedish OSCE Chair for keeping the resolution of this conflict at the top of the OSCE agenda, including by organizing this special session of the ASRC.
2. Madam Chair, more than seven years have passed since Russia started its aggression against Ukraine and, regrettably, the prospects for a comprehensive conflict resolution remain remote. Despite the general adherence to the additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire agreed in July 2020, the security situation remains volatile and lately, the number of ceasefire violations is unfortunately increasing. In this regard, we commend Ukraine for its restraint in responding to military provocations despite the regrettable and unacceptable death toll among its military personnel.
3. We also see other worrying trends, such as Russia's recent military build-up near the Ukrainian border and in the illegally annexed Crimea as well as the closure of some parts of the Black Sea to foreign State vessels until October. We once again urge Russia to meet its commitments under the Vienna Document and to provide the necessary transparency on the remaining forces and equipment. The European Union has been consistent in expressing its deep concern about the on-going large-scale militarisation of the Crimean Peninsula by Russia, which impacts

the security situation in the Black Sea region and beyond. The building of the bridge at the Kerch Strait, without Ukraine's consent, and the arbitrary inspection regime there, limit the freedom of navigation to and from Ukrainian ports.

4. We fully support the efforts of the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group in working towards a sustainable political solution to the conflict. The CiO Special Representative Mikko Kinnunen, SMM Chief Monitor Yaşar Halit Çevik and all the coordinators of the working groups have our full support in their important task of facilitating the implementation of the Minsk agreements. In this context, we regret the stalemate in the Trilateral Contact Group. Russia's attempts to advance a distorted narrative of the conflict by asserting that it is merely a mediator of an "internal Ukrainian conflict" are not constructive and an obstruction to the negotiations. The Minsk Agreements do not mention the necessity to establish a "direct dialogue" between Kyiv and the non-government controlled areas, as they only provide for consultations with so-called "representatives of the certain areas in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions" with regard constitutional amendments and the special order of local self-government (special status) as well as the law on local elections. On the contrary, the Minsk Agreements are unambiguous in stating that the TCG consists of representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE. Russia has therefore clearly accepted its binding responsibility in the peaceful settlement of the conflict. We call on Russia, as a party to the conflict, to engage constructively in the TCG and the N4 as well as to implement the Minsk Agreements in full.
  
5. Madam Chair, border monitoring is an essential element of a political resolution to the conflict and the Minsk Agreements outline a clear role for the OSCE in monitoring and verification of the Russia-Ukraine State border. The Border Observation Mission in Gukovo and Donetsk is an important confidence building measure in this regard and we recall our support for its significant expansion to all border crossings on the Russia-Ukraine State border temporarily not under control of the Ukrainian government as well as to monitoring between them. We recall that a broadly supported draft decision on this topic was presented last year at the Tirana Ministerial Council, but could not be adopted due to the unconstructive position of Russia. In this context, we strongly encourage the Russian Federation

to reconsider its position in order to allow for a resumption of longer mandates for the Mission.

6. We commend the invaluable work of the women and men of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission who continued with their monitoring activities despite the pandemic. All signatories of the Minsk agreements, including Russia, have agreed on the need to ensure the SMM safe and secure access and that any restriction of their freedom of movement deserves a rapid response. This should also include the areas near the Ukraine-Russia State border and the illegally annexed Crimea. We condemn the restrictions of movement the SMM is facing, predominantly in non-government-controlled areas, including those imposed under the pretext of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such restrictions constitute an impediment to the implementation of the SMM mandate and seriously threaten the effective functioning of the Mission. We are deeply concerned about the unprecedented restrictions on the Mission's assets, including targeting and jamming of the SMM's UAVs and the destruction of cameras. We therefore urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to meet the Minsk commitments in full and to allow the SMM to fulfil its mandate.
7. The negative effect the closed entry and exit checkpoints along the contact line have on the civilian population is of high concern to us. Hundreds of thousands are currently separated from family members and cut off from their livelihood, pensions, medical care and other services. We welcome the steps taken by Ukraine to open the Shchastia and Zolote EECPs and to provide services for the residents of the non-government controlled areas there. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to ensure the opening of these two EECPs, as well as of all currently closed EECPs, in order to improve the humanitarian situation at the contact line.
8. The EU remains deeply concerned about the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the in the areas under effective control of the Russia-backed armed formations and the illegally annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. The arbitrary targeting of Crimean Tatars and other residents of the peninsula by the Russian authorities, the application of

Russian anti-extremism legislation and unduly lengthy prison sentences have become a persistent trend. The EU deplores that the so-called Supreme Court in the illegally annexed Crimea on 21 May sentenced the Crimean native Ivan Yatskin to 11 years in prison on charges related to 'state treason via spying' and alleged collaboration with Ukraine's Security Service and, on 1 June sentenced the Chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, Rafat Chubarov, to 6 years imprisonment for charges related to his opposition to the illegal annexation of Crimea. Their sentencings illustrate yet again Russia's blatant disregard of its obligations under international law. The EU reiterates its call for the immediate release of all residents of the peninsula who have been unduly detained.

9. We are also deeply concerned that freedom of expression and media freedom, as well as freedom of peaceful assembly, are severely restricted in the Crimean peninsula. Journalists, media workers, human rights defenders and activists are especially targeted by the de facto authorities. In addition, the Crimean Tatars are unacceptably persecuted and have their human rights gravely violated, including through the shutting down of Crimean Tatar media outlets, and the banning of the activities of the Mejlis, their self-governing body, as well as the persecution of its leaders and members of their community.
10. We also condemn all attempts to impose Russian laws and regulations upon the population in the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine and in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. We deplore the issuing of Russian passports on a massive scale to Ukrainian citizens in a simplified and selective manner. These measures violate the sovereignty of Ukraine contradict the objectives of the Minsk Agreements and impede a future reintegration process.
11. The EU reaffirms its resolute support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders. The EU does not recognize and continues to condemn the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation, which is a violation of international law.

The Candidate Countries 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 and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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