



## **“QUINT” STATEMENT ON THE OSCE’S EFFORTS TOWARDS PEACE WITH RESPECT TO UKRAINE**

We, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Albania, Sweden, Slovakia, Poland, and North Macedonia, representing the previous, current, incoming, and future Chairs of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), remain deeply concerned about the ongoing conflict with respect to Ukraine. While we welcome the improved situation on the ground in eastern Ukraine in the second half of 2020, much remains to be done for a comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the conflict. Bearing in mind our commonly agreed principles and commitments, we remain troubled by the situation and by the conflict’s wider impact on security and stability in Europe and beyond. The conflict made clear that adherence to international law, as well as to our principles and commitments, cannot be taken for granted and that respect for such principles and commitments needs to be restored.

We would have strongly wished to have seen consensus emerge on a ministerial declaration that would focus on the OSCE’s efforts towards peace with respect to Ukraine. This could serve as an impetus for the conflict settlement process. Unfortunately, continued disagreement, in particular over reference to the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine, to the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, to the maritime areas surrounding the Crimean peninsula, as well as related challenges with respect to the human rights and fundamental freedoms, made it impossible to reach consensus on the text. However, we welcome that during the negotiations, almost all participating States clearly reaffirmed their respect and support for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

The OSCE will work towards the peaceful resolution of the conflict, fully committed to upholding the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and all other OSCE principles and commitments, to which all participating States have agreed.

Like all the other participating States, we deplore the devastating humanitarian impact of the conflict, which in its seventh year is continuing to cause casualties and further suffering for civilians. We recall the obligations related to the respect for and the protection of civilians. We underline the need to address the serious socio-economic implications of the conflict. We emphasize the need to ensure safe access, delivery, storage, and distribution of humanitarian assistance to those in need, on the basis of an international mechanism and with respect for Ukraine’s sovereignty, in line with international humanitarian principles and standards.

We underline the importance of the respect for and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, within the whole territory of Ukraine.

We reaffirm the importance of achieving full and comprehensive implementation of the Minsk agreements.

We support the efforts undertaken in the Normandy format, welcome the summit meeting held in Paris on 9 December 2019, and call on the sides to fully implement the Common Agreed Conclusions of the Paris “Normandy” Summit in their entirety as soon as possible. It is our hope that we will see the continuation of the Normandy format efforts at the highest level.

We recognize the crucial role of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) in the implementation of the Minsk agreements. We commend and reiterate our support for the efforts of the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group and of the co-ordinators of its working groups on economic, humanitarian, political and security issues. We appreciate the good offices that have been provided by Belarus in hosting the meetings. We call on the sides to engage in the TCG discussions constructively, in good faith, and focusing on the substance of the Minsk agreements.

We welcome the considerable level of commitment to the ceasefire since the measures to strengthen the ceasefire took effect on 27 July 2020. This demonstrates that positive steps are possible when there is political will. We note that the months since 27 July 2020 have marked the longest period with a significantly low number of ceasefire violations, including many days with no ceasefire violations recorded by the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM). No civilian casualty due to shelling or fire from small arms and light weapons was corroborated by the SMM for close to four months. Ongoing ceasefire violations, including the first confirmed incident involving civilian casualties directly caused by the use of weapons since 27 July, are however worrying. We reaffirm the importance of adhering to the full and comprehensive ceasefire and ensuring the withdrawal of heavy weapons.

We call upon the sides to build on this improved situation on the ground and to make progress in other aspects of the settlement of the conflict. While we commend the common understanding achieved in the TCG on identifying additional areas for demining and for disengagement of forces and hardware, we call upon the sides to engage constructively to reach the final decisions on these issues and to implement them. We also call upon the sides to proceed with other aspects of the Common Agreed Conclusions of the Paris “Normandy” Summit, regarding the immediate measures to stabilize the situation in the conflict area and the measures to implement the political provisions of the Minsk agreements.

We welcome that, during the negotiations, all participating States commended the essential work of the SMM in contributing to reducing tensions and fostering peace, stability and security. We express our sincere appreciation of the dedication of the women and men working in the Mission.

We strongly reaffirm that the SMM is mandated to have safe and secure access throughout Ukraine, including in areas adjacent to the internationally recognized borders. We remain concerned by the continuing restrictions on its freedom of movement and recall that there can be no justification for any form of interference in the Mission’s work and that the SMM must be provided with the conditions necessary for it to implement its mandate. We commend the SMM for the efforts it is making to this end, while taking into account duty-of-care considerations amidst the extraordinary circumstances of 2020. The Mission must have free access across the line of contact and within non-government-controlled areas. We condemn any threat to the safety and security of SMM staff and the targeting of SMM assets, including its unmanned aerial vehicles. These incidents should be prevented and remedial action should be taken.

We recall the obligations relating to the protection of civilian infrastructure that is critical for women, men, girls and boys on both sides of the line of contact and commend the valuable efforts of the SMM in facilitating the functioning of such infrastructure, as well as in reporting on other human dimension issues.

We denounce the indiscriminate use of mines and other explosive objects, which continue to cause casualties among civilians, including children, and pose a constant life-threatening risk to the population and the SMM staff, even in the improved security situation observed since 27 July 2020. We underline the urgent need to proceed with demining, to refrain from laying additional mines, increase mine awareness and fulfil all commitments on mine action.

We welcome the mutual release and exchange of conflict-related detainees, including the most recent ones on 29 December 2019 and 16 April 2020, and call for the release and exchange of all hostages and unlawfully detained persons, based on the principle of “all for all”, starting with “all identified for all identified”. We stress the importance of the full and unconditional access to all detained persons by international organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

We welcome the plan to open new crossing points near the settlements of Zolote and Shchastia and urge their full opening as soon as possible. More efforts are required to improve the freedom of movement of civilians and we encourage the re-opening of existing crossing points and the further opening of new ones along the line of contact, based primarily on humanitarian criteria, in line with the Common Agreed Conclusions of the Paris “Normandy” Summit.

We welcome the role played by the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk.

We call for enhanced transparency in the areas adjacent to the Ukrainian-Russian border, through monitoring activities as provided for in the Minsk agreements, until the reinstatement of full control of the state border by the Government of Ukraine throughout the conflict area.

We express our gratitude to the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine and the other relevant OSCE executive structures, including the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and the Representative on Freedom of the Media; as well as the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly for their contributions to the efforts in addressing the consequences of the conflict, and encourage them to continue their result-oriented work.

We also need to continue to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda. It is essential that we include and secure the meaningful participation of women and men in all conflict resolution efforts.

We underline the OSCE’s valuable efforts regarding developments with respect to Ukraine, which demonstrate its added value as a regional arrangement for the maintenance of international peace and security in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.