

## 18. Items relating to Ukraine

### **Letter dated 13 April 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council ([S/2014/264](#))**

During the period under review, the Security Council held one open videoconference in connection with the item entitled “Letter dated 13 April 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council ([S/2014/264](#))”.<sup>668</sup> More information on the videoconference is provided in the table below.<sup>669</sup>

On 11 February 2021, Council members heard briefings by the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Europe Chairperson-in-Office, and the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission.

The Under-Secretary-General recalled the conclusions endorsed by the leaders of France, Germany, the Russian Federation and Ukraine in Paris, which outlined a series of steps to stabilize the situation on the ground, including through confidence-building measures and a sustained ceasefire.<sup>670</sup> She also recalled their agreement to support efforts, both in the Normandy Four and the Trilateral Contact Group, to make progress on the key security and political provisions of the Minsk agreements. In this regard, she noted that the Trilateral Contact Group had agreed to an indefinite ceasefire, which came into force on 27 July 2020.

Since then, she indicated that the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine had reported a significant decrease in civilian casualties from exchanges of fire and described the release and exchange of conflict-related detainees as another encouraging development. The Under-Secretary-General stressed that, without progress on the related security and political tracks, the overall situation remained fragile. She added that the sides had

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<sup>668</sup> For more information on the procedures and working methods developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, see part II.

<sup>669</sup> See also [A/46/2](#), part II, chap. 39.

<sup>670</sup> See [S/2021/159](#).

made little significant progress on implementing the other agreed political and security provisions. While there was relative calm the humanitarian situation had not improved. She also reported on how the COVID-19 pandemic had compounded the difficult socioeconomic conditions of civilians in conflict-affected areas. The Under-Secretary-General stressed that until a sustainable political solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine was found, the risk of backsliding was real and expressed deep concern by the increase in security incidents in several hotspots along the contact line in previous months. Recalling that in resolution [2202 \(2015\)](#) the Council had endorsed the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements which together with the Minsk protocol and the Minsk memorandum, remained the only agreed framework for a negotiated, peaceful settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

In her briefing, the Special Representative of the OSCE in Europe Chairperson-in-Office updated the Council on the work of the Trilateral Contact Group. In spite of the travel restrictions imposed after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, she reported that the Trilateral Contact Group had continued its efforts towards the implementation of the Minsk agreements and the 2019 Normandy summit tasks. With regard to the release and exchange of conflict-related detainees following the principle “all for all”, she noted that a step forward had been taken in April, when 34 prisoners had been released from detention. Concerning the Trilateral Contact Group agreement to stabilize the ceasefire, the Special Representative affirmed that the number of violations observed by the Special Monitoring Mission had been significantly lower than in the first half of the previous year. She said that it was a source of great concern that progress on humanitarian and security related issues failed due to political considerations concluding that it would be difficult to maintain the relative calm on the front line if humanitarian and political issues remained blocked.

The Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) provided an update on the security situation in eastern Ukraine, recent developments concerning the implementation of the Minsk agreements and the impact of the conflict on civilians. While the overall security situation along the contact line remained volatile, he said that the agreement reached within the Trilateral Contact Group had been followed by a substantial decrease in the level of armed violence having observed the longest-lasting reduction in violence since it began systematically recording ceasefire violations. Despite commitments from the sides, newly built trench

extensions and improvements to military structures had been observed on both sides of the contact line in addition to the presence of heavy weapons and military-type positions in residential areas, putting civilians in harm's way. The Chief Monitor also regretted that discussions in the working group had reached an impasse on a joint coordination mechanism to follow up and investigate alleged breaches of the additional measures. He provided a detailed account of the heavy toll that small-arms fire, shelling and unexploded ordnance had on the lives of civilians and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions impeding civilians to cross the contact line between Governmental and non-Government-controlled areas. He reported that ceasefire violations continued to be observed in close proximity to several critical infrastructure sites. The Chief Monitor also stressed that the freedom of movement, enshrined in the Mission's mandate and the Minsk agreements, remained hampered by persistent obstructions, particularly in areas outside Government control. Should that trend continue, he added that the Mission would be increasingly constrained in its ability to monitor the situation on the ground and to report objective and corroborated information, which otherwise could support renewed efforts at the negotiating table to maintain the ceasefire.

Following the briefing, Council members discussed the issues related to the implementation of provisions of the Minsk agreements and the continued challenges to achieve a sustainable resolution of the situation in eastern Ukraine. Council members welcomed the encouraging developments and signs of effort and commitments, particularly consensus reached at the Normandy Four summit in Paris in December 2019 and reiterated the need for the strict compliance with resolution [2202 \(2015\)](#).

Welcoming the progress made since the summit in Paris in 2019, particularly prisoner exchanges, reduction in violence and the establishment of new disengagement zones, many Council members expressed deep concern about the recent spike in ceasefire violations, the issues of mine action and socioeconomic conditions of civilians in conflict-affected areas, further exacerbated by the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and a fragile economy.

In that connection, several delegations addressed the agreed commitments and measures related to the ceasefire<sup>671</sup> as well as to unexploded ordnance, landmines and other explosive

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<sup>671</sup> Ibid., Ireland, Mexico, Norway, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Tunisia, United States, Viet Nam and Germany.

devices.<sup>672</sup> While the representative of Ireland called on the parties to end the indiscriminate shelling of residential areas and critical civilian infrastructure and to ease movement restrictions to avoid exacerbating an already acute humanitarian crisis, the representative of Norway called to ensure unrestricted humanitarian access to the conflict-affected population in line with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Some Council members expressed concern at the restrictions on the freedom of movement of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission and urged all parties to provide safe and secure access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea.<sup>673</sup> Council members also expressed concern about the serious human rights violations and abuses linked to the conflict as reported by the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,<sup>674</sup> and called on the Russian Federation to release political prisoners,<sup>675</sup> and to facilitate full and unrestricted access to the whole of Ukraine for the international human rights monitoring mechanisms and bodies.<sup>676</sup>

On the holding of local elections, the representative of France reiterated its appeal to the Russian and Ukrainian sides to make progress on the definition of the political and security conditions for the organization of local elections, as agreed by the Heads of State and Government at the Normandy summit in Paris. The representative of the United Kingdom agreed that local elections had to pave the way for the special status of Donbas but stated that the Russian Federation would not support the security conditions needed to enable those elections. She also reminded the Russian Federation of its obligations to withdraw its military personnel and weapons from the territory of Ukraine. The representative of Germany speaking to the Council as part of the so-called Normandy format, pointed out that the Russian heavy weapons had not been withdrawn from the line of command and control, in violation of the Minsk agreement.

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<sup>672</sup> Ibid., Ireland, Mexico and Norway.

<sup>673</sup> Ibid., Estonia, France, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, United Kingdom and United States.

<sup>674</sup> Ibid., Estonia, France, Ireland, Norway and United States.

<sup>675</sup> Ibid., United States.

<sup>676</sup> Ibid., Estonia and Norway.

Member States held differing views on the origin and responsibilities in connection with the conflict in eastern Ukraine. While several speakers alleged that the Russian Federation had instigated and continued to fuel the conflict,<sup>677</sup> the Russian Federation affirmed instead that Ukraine had occupied Ukraine, and it was waging war on its own territory.

The representative of the Russian Federation also stated that Kyiv was unwilling to observe its obligations under the Minsk package of measures and recalled that Russia was not mentioned as a party to the Minsk agreements. By contrast, the representative of Germany recalled Ukrainian President's reminder that the composition of the Trilateral Contact Group consisted of Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE. Also participating in the videoconference, the Head of Delegation of Ukraine to the Trilateral Contact Group provided an overview of practical steps taken by Ukraine to resolve the conflict and explained that owing to the artificial obstructions of the work of the Trilateral Contact Group on the political track, there had been no progress in the consideration of Ukraine's working proposals regarding the implementation of the political aspects of the general agreed conclusions of the Normandy Four summit in Paris on 9 December 2019. He added that there was still no adequate response from the Russian side to Ukraine's actions on other fronts.

A number of Council members also reiterated their condemnation of the annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol and the occupation of certain territories in the eastern Ukraine and called on the Russian Federation to reverse this act.<sup>678</sup> Recalling General Assembly resolution [68/262](#), the representative of Mexico reiterated the need to respect the unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine in accordance with international law, especially the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations. In that connection, several other representatives of Council members also reiterated their strong support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>679</sup>

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<sup>677</sup> Ibid., Estonia, France, Norway, United Kingdom, United States, Ukraine and Germany.

<sup>678</sup> Ibid., Estonia, Norway and United States. For further details on the discussion, see part III, sect. I.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid., Estonia, Ireland, Norway, Tunisia, United Kingdom and United States.

**Videoconferences: Letter dated 13 April 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council ([S/2014/264](#))**

<i>Videoconference date</i>	<i>Videoconference record</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining) and record of written procedure</i>
11 February 2021	<a href="#">S/2021/159</a>	Letter dated 15 February 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	