



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE

PC.DEL/915/20  
13 July 2020

ENGLISH only

STATEMENT IN REPLY TO THE BRIEFINGS  
GIVEN BY AMBASSADORS GRAU AND ÇEVİK

Delivered by Chargé d'Affaires a.i. Henning Hj. Johansen  
at the Permanent Council, Vienna, 4 July 2019

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

Let me join others in thanking Ambassadors Çevik and Grau for their reports.

The reporting period has been heavily affected by the COVID-19. The pandemic has placed additional burdens on the already vulnerable and suffering civilian population. It has also further complicated the work of the SMM, mainly in the form of restrictions on its freedom of movement. These restrictions are overwhelmingly imposed by members of the armed formations, typically with reference to COVID-19 and despite the fact that the Mission has adopted a number of precautionary measures to protect its members and the population from COVID-19.

As pointed out by the Chief Monitor, the Mission's operational posture and ability to fulfil its mandate and its key tasks suffer from these restrictions. Furthermore, these restrictions to a large extent divide the SMM into three separate entities. This significantly affect the SMM's operational capability and its ability to replenish its operations in non-government-controlled areas.

The imposition of restrictions on the SMM's freedom of movement runs contrary to the mandate agreed upon by the Permanent Council, as well as to the commitments undertaken in the Minsk agreements. We call on the parties to fulfil their commitments. We urge the Russian Federation to use its considerable influence on the armed formations it backs to ensure that the SMM's freedom of movement is respected.

In a time where the SMM's monitors' capacity is reduced, it is particularly worrying that its technical assets have been targeted, reducing the capacity to monitor the situation even further. We condemn the deliberate destruction of the SMM's cameras and UAVs, predominantly in areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations.

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The conflict continues to have a high human cost. During the first half of May, the SMM recorded the highest spike in reports of civilian casualties in the last two years. We are particularly concerned that the SMM continues to observe, often for the first time, mines, UXO and other explosive objects, on both sides of the contact line. Once again, we call upon all parties to refrain from laying mines and to contribute to mine clearance, recalling obligations under the Mine Ban Convention, the amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and other relevant instruments. Norway commends Ambassadors Çevik and Grau for their efforts in the TCG with a view to implementing the conclusions of the Normandy Four Summit in December 2019, including the development of an updated demining plan.

To conclude, we call on all parties to uphold the ceasefire, protect civilians and continue to follow up the commitments of the Minsk agreements and the Normandy Summit. Norway again reiterates its strong support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, including the Crimean Peninsula and the adjoining territorial waters.

Thank you.