



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE

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

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 4 July 2019

*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

Mme. Chair,

First of all, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to Ambassador Çevik. Norway continues to attach great importance to the work of the SMM, and we look forward to cooperating with you, Ambassador.

Next, I would like to join others in thanking Ambassadors Çevik and Sajdik for their reports to the Permanent Council, and to assure them of Norway's full support.

Sadly, the situation in and around Ukraine remains volatile. The suffering of the civilian population continues. The ceasefire violations are numerous, each a violation of the commitments the parties have made under the Minsk agreements.

We are therefore all the more pleased to receive some positive news. The agreement on withdrawal in the Stanytsia Luhanska area is a welcome development, and the SMM's reports on implementation have been encouraging. We commend the parties for displaying this willingness to deescalate tension in the area.

We urge them to continue to act in good faith and to create the conditions necessary for improving the humanitarian situation. This should include demining, repairs to the bridge and improved conditions for crossing the contact line. Such measures would significantly reduce the hardship and danger faced by civilians.

In other areas, we call on the parties to avoid damaging civilian infrastructure, and to show willingness to agree on conditions that allow the repair of critical infrastructure. As before, the SMM plays a vital role in monitoring the ceasefires.

We commend the SMM's work on an environmental assessment report of eastern Ukraine. Knowledge of such hazards will contribute to the safety and security, not only of the local population, but also of our monitors. Environmental protection and emergency preparedness are important issues in Ukraine.

We appreciate the report's paragraph on gender equality and UNSCR 1325. As mandated by the Gender Action Plan, a gender perspective is to be integrated in all activities and should be reported on throughout. Merely referring to promotion of gender equality and protection of women is not sufficient. To understand how the SMM further can improve, we need impact focused reporting on gender-mainstreamed activities in future reports. Integration of a gender perspective is directly related to the effectiveness of the SMM.

We call on all parties to the conflict to enable the SMM to fulfil its mandate, recalling that its mandate covers all Ukrainian territory, including the Crimean peninsula. Still, the SMM's monitors continue to experience threats, intimidation, and restrictions on their freedom of movement, predominantly in non-government controlled areas. Also, the UAVs are subjected to gunfire and signal interference. We urge all parties to put an end to such practices and to ensure the safety and security of the SMM monitors and their monitoring equipment.

The safety and security of the monitors is of great importance to my government. We have full confidence that you, Ambassador Çevik, will continue Ambassador Apakan's tireless work to ensure the monitors' best possible security conditions.

We thank ambassadors Sajdik and Çevik for the important work they and their teams are doing under demanding circumstances. We highly appreciate the SMM's reporting and its efforts to reduce tensions on the ground.

Mme. Chair,

More than five years have passed since Russia violated international law by occupying Crimea and destabilising Eastern Ukraine. Norway reiterates its support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, including the Crimean Peninsula and the adjoining territorial waters. Norway urges Russia to comply with the order of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea of 25 May, and release the sailors and vessels seized close to the Kerch Strait on 25 November last year.

Thank you.