

Normandy format telephone call

Ukraine - new impetus for the peace process

For the first time in several months a telephone conference on Monday has given the four heads of state and government of Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine the chance to discuss the volatile situation in the parts of eastern Ukraine affected by the conflict. A series of emergency measures were agreed.



German staffers also support the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine
Photo: *imago/ITAR-TASS*

Chancellor Angela Merkel and the newly elected French President Emmanuel Macron, for whom it was the first Normandy format talks, spoke by phone on Monday (24 July) with Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko and the Russian President Vladimir Putin. The detailed "Normandy format" talks aimed to revitalise efforts to implement the Minsk agreements and finally bring about a lasting and peaceful solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Negotiations have been ongoing at various levels in what is known as the "**Normandy format**" or "N4", since the first meeting of this sort took place in Normandy on 6 June 2014. The focus is the practical implementation of the package of measures agreed in 2015 in Minsk, primarily a ceasefire, withdrawal of troops and political reforms. At the last top-level meeting, held on 19 October 2016 in Berlin, participants agreed on a concrete roadmap.

OSCE report

The head of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan, and the deputy head of mission, Alexander Hug, were also present at the start of the telephone conference. The diplomats reported on the current critical security situation in the Donbas – in spite of the ceasefire agreed. Against this background they explained the special challenges facing the Special Monitoring Mission, as it attempts to monitor the parties to the conflict effectively and without sustaining any damage along the contact line.

Agreement on emergency measures

The participants agreed that the Minsk package of measures agreed in February 2015 must be implemented in full – as agreed at the summit meetings in Paris on 2 October 2015 and Berlin on 19 October 2016. In order to push ahead with the political and diplomatic process, agreement was reached on emergency measures that address the most urgent humanitarian economic and especially security-relevant issues.

The spotlight is on strict compliance with the ceasefire. It was once again reaffirmed on 21 June by the Trilateral Contact Group, which brings together Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE, but it has been repeatedly violated. Efforts are now to focus on the disengagement of troops and the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the most critical hotspots. This too was already required under existing agreements.

Another measure is to ensure safe access for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to all parts of the Donbas, including the parts of the Ukrainian-Russian border that are temporarily uncontrolled. The safety of OSCE staff must be guaranteed.

Call on the parties to the conflict

The Chancellor and the French President called on the parties to the conflict to take humanitarian steps on both sides. The priority is to finalise the agreed exchange of detainees "all for all" by the end of the year. Consultations in the individual working groups are to be continued very soon. At top level, telephone talks are also to continue when appropriate.

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