

PRESS RELEASE

133/22

19/02/2022

Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the situation in eastern Ukraine and the Russian military build-up

Russia's massive build-up of armed forces in and around Ukraine remains of grave concern. The EU urges Russia to de-escalate by a substantial withdrawal of military forces from the proximity of Ukraine's borders.

This escalation is now compounded by the increase in ceasefire violations along the line of contact in eastern Ukraine in recent days. The EU condemns the use of heavy weaponry and indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas, which constitute a clear violation of the Minsk agreements and international humanitarian law. We commend Ukraine's posture of restraint in the face of continued provocations and efforts at destabilisation. We support the OSCE Special Representative's proposal to convene an extraordinary session of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) in order to defuse current tensions and call on all participants to the TCG to take part in this much-needed effort to address the current situation diplomatically.

The EU is extremely concerned that staged events, as noted recently, could be used as a pretext for possible military escalation. The EU is also witnessing an intensification of information manipulation efforts to support such objectives. In this context, we firmly express our support for the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission, whose observers play a key role in de-escalation efforts. This mission must be allowed to carry out its full mandate without restrictions to its activities and freedom of movement to the benefit and security of the people in eastern Ukraine.

The EU sees no grounds for allegations coming from the non-governmental controlled areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of a possible Ukrainian attack. The EU urges Russia to engage in meaningful dialogue, diplomacy, show restraint and de-escalate.

As stated before, any further military aggression by Russia against Ukraine will have massive consequences and severe costs in response, including restrictive measures coordinated with partners.

The EU reiterates its unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders.

Press office - General Secretariat of the Council

Rue de la Loi 175 - B-1048 BRUSSELS - Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319

press@consilium.europa.eu - www.consilium.europa.eu/press