

## HIGHLIGHTS

# PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS



July 9 – 15, 2021

### SECURITY SITUATION IN DONBAS IS DETERIORATING

The Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine, Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik [addressed](#) the OSCE Permanent Council. In his address, he noted that the security situation in eastern Ukraine was not improving, furthermore, the geography of fighting along the contact line had widened, the number of cases of use of lethal and destructive weapons had risen along with the scale of damage to civilian infrastructure from it. He reported that the SMM had observed the trifold increase in ceasefire violations over the period from 21 March to 6 June. Over the same period, there were 25 civilian casualties, three quarters of them were due to mines and UXOs. Ambassador Çevik called upon the sides to return to a constructive approach both on the ground and in the Working Group on Security of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG). During the meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council, the EU Mission to the OSCE [called](#) Russia to ensure unimpeded movement of the SMM in the areas of Donbas that are not controlled by the Ukrainian government, noting that due to constant violations of freedom of movement, the SMM is forced to operate as three separate divisions.

During her visit to Donetsk, the Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross Delegation to Ukraine Florence Jillett [stated](#) deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the conflict zone in eastern Ukraine as compared to 2020. Particularly, she called for providing the residents of areas of Donbas that are temporarily uncontrolled by Ukrainian government with access to vaccines from coronavirus and restraining from politicization of the vaccination process.

## VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY VISITED GERMANY

On 12 July, the president of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited Germany where he [met](#) the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the author of the “Steinmeier’s formula” concerning the status of Donbas and the order for holding elections in the region. During the talks, bilateral relationships, implementation of the Minsk Agreements, the reform process in Ukraine, economic issues as well as relationships with Russia and the “Nord Stream 2” construction were discussed. At the briefing on the negotiations with Angela Merkel, Volodymyr Zelenskyy [stated](#) that Germany reiterated its position of supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine and peaceful resolution in Donbas. Discussing the situation in Donbas, Angela Merkel [noted](#) that the progress in implementation of the Minsk Agreements had been slowed down, notwithstanding the efforts by Ukraine, and called for implementation of the “Steinmeier’s formula” and holding elections in Donbas. She also noted that Germany would put efforts for Ukraine to remain a gas transit country after the launch of the “Nord Stream 2” pipeline. The meeting and the reached results are [described by](#) “Radio Liberty”. The review of the talks coverage by German media is [prepared by](#) Deutsche Welle.

## NORMANDY FORMAT MEETING: PREPARATION IS ONGOING, NO DATE IDENTIFIED

Ambassador of France to Ukraine Etienne de Poncins [noted](#) in his interview that the negotiation process on resolution of the conflict in Donbas had reached deadlock, reporting that currently, work on organization of the Normandy format meeting at the level of ministers of foreign affairs with the aim to restore ceasefire is underway. Information by the Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine Andriy Yermak on the [possibility to have this meeting](#) in the nearest future was later [added](#) on by Oleksiy Arestovych, the speaker of the Ukrainian delegation to the TCG. He clarified that it was about declaration of intentions, and the exact date for the summit had not been identified. Also, the final agreement on engagement of the US in the meeting has not been [reached](#).

## EU PROLONGS SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA

Heads of MFA of the EU countries [have decided](#) to prolong sectoral economic sanctions against Russia for half a year due to non-implementation of the Minsk Agreements. The decision of the Council has been made after the latest evaluation of the progress in implementation of the agreements at the meeting on 24-25 June this year.

## DISCUSSION AROUND VLADIMIR PUTIN’S ARTICLE ON UKRAINE

The President of Russia Vladimir Putin [published](#) an article devoted to the situation in Ukraine where he expressed the idea that “Kyiv simply does not need Donbas” and also stated the responsibility of Western countries for the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The press-secretary of the Russian president Dmitry Peskov refused to answer the question on Russian readiness to include the parts of Donbas uncontrolled by the Ukrainian government into its territory, [stating](#) that Russian actions in Donbas are grounded on humanitarian incentives and are conducted according to the international law. The Minister of Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine Oleksiy Reznikov [characterised](#) the article as being manipulative and an instrument of hybrid pressure on Ukraine by Russia. According to him, Ukraine needs modernization of the Minsk Agreements, strengthening of sanctions against Russia and support of the Euro-Atlantic integration for defence from this pressure. “Donbas Realities” [analyses](#) the use of this article in the media of the so-called “L/DPR”. The Atlantic Council publication [notes](#) the danger of the article that questions borders of Ukraine, and provides reflections on what should be done by Western countries to respond to this signal. “Radio Liberty” offers [comments](#) of Ukrainian experts on the aims of publishing the article.