

## HIGHLIGHTS

# PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS



July 16 – 22, 2021

### US-GERMANY AGREEMENT ON NORD STREAM 2: ANALYTICS

On 21 July, US Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland [announced](#) that the US and Germany managed to reach an agreement that would allow completing the construction of the Russian gas pipeline Nord Stream 2 without additional sanctions from the US side. A [joint statement](#) underscores that both countries disapprove the aggressive actions of Russia towards Ukraine. In addition, the US committed to support the efforts in restoring peace in Donbas within the framework of the Normandy format. According to the statement, Germany will support the US in their efforts to ensure the prolongation of the contract for transiting Russian gas through Ukraine by 2034. A special focus was on providing Ukraine with financial support with a purpose to diversify energy sources, and on the possibility to introduce sanctions against Russia in case of further aggressive actions against Ukraine.

On the same day, Germany's chancellor Angela Merkel and Russian president Vladimir Putin [discussed](#) the possibilities to prolong the contract on transportation of Russian gas through the territory of Ukraine, with no specific outcomes of the discussion being announced.

Earlier, the president of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy [said](#) that despite the efforts of the US and Germany to resolve the crises related to the implementation of the Nord Stream 2 project, these countries did not offer enough of specific steps to counter threats arising from the launch of the pipeline. Ukrainian Minister for Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland Zbigniew Rau made a

joint [statement](#) and condemned the US-Germany agreement as such that increases the possibilities for Russia's destructive influence on European security.

The agreement has been strongly criticized by the Ukrainian civil society. British journalist and political analyst Bohdan Nahaylo in his article for KyivPost [said](#) that, with this deal, Washington and Berlin left the democratic world in a disgraceful shambles.

## A GROUP FOR ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING ESTABLISHED WITHIN THE TRILATERAL CONTACT GROUP

On 20 and 21 July, the meetings of the Trilateral Contact Group and its working subgroups were [convened](#).

- During the session of the humanitarian subgroup, the Ukrainian delegations confirmed its readiness to speed up the preparation for the next stage of the mutual release of conflict-related detainees.
- The security subgroup discussed the issues of demining of the 19 locations at the contact line that had been defined earlier and movement restrictions for the OSCE SMM.
- The subgroup on socio-economic matters discussed the visit of the experts from the International Atomic energy Agency to inspect nuclear materials in two locations in the certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions that are not controlled by the government of Ukraine.

Ukrainian side welcomed the establishment of an expert subgroup to monitor the situation with the environment with regards to the flooding of coal mines along the contact line and thanked OSCE for its facilitation. The first meeting of the environmental subgroup is planned for September.

## NEW SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE OSCE CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE IN UKRAINE AND THE TCG

Following the meetings within the Trilateral Contact Group, the Special representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the TCG Heidi Grau [stated](#) that unresolved procedural issues and political disagreements prevented the parties from making practical decisions in the political and security subgroups. She called on the parties to display political will to resume the ceasefire in Donbas. This meeting was the last one for Heidi Grau who has held this position since December 2019. A diplomat from Finland Mikko Kunnunen [has been appointed](#) as the new Special representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the TCG. He will take office on 1 August.

## ANNIVERSARY OF THE DOWNING OF MALAYSIA AIRLINES FLIGHT MH-17: RUSSIA FILES A CASE TO THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

With regards to the 7th anniversary of the downing in Donbas of Malaysia airlines flight MH-17 the Prosecutor General of Ukraine Iryna Venediktova [said](#) that the investigation into the circumstances of the plane crash was not complete. As of now, the identification of the offenders continues, together with partners from the international investigative group.

In the statements dedicated to the anniversary, [the US](#) and [the EU](#) once again called on the Russian Federation to assume responsibility for the shot down aircraft. Meanwhile, as became known on 22 July, the Russian Federation filed a [case](#) to the European Court of Human Rights with an intergovernmental complaint against Ukraine, including for not having closed its airspace above the zone of hostilities in Donbas and for the downing of the flight MH-17. According to the statement made by the Prosecutor General's Office of the RF, a part of the claims is connected with the "violations committed by the Ukrainian authorities against Russian citizens". The Head of the MFA of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleva said during a [press-briefing](#) that the RF claim had been filed with a propagandistic purpose and has no chances to stand in court.

## LEGAL CHANGES FOR DONBAS RESIDENTS

- Testing of a [mechanism for the remote identification](#) by means of an e-signature for internally displaced persons and residents of the non-government-controlled territory of Donbas has started in Ukraine. This is particularly relevant considering the unstable operations of the entry-exit crossing points (EECP) from the side of the so-called 'L/DPR' and lockdown measures that limit the rights and possibilities of people who suffered as a result of the conflict in Donbas.
- On 21 July, a [simplified vaccination procedure](#) against COVID-19 was introduced for the residents of the certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions that are not controlled by the Ukrainian government. With preliminary registration requirements abolished, one can get vaccinated having crossed an EECP to the government-controlled territory and visited one of the vaccination centers in Donetsk or Luhansk regions.
- On 23 July, a law entered into force that [freezes administrative penalties](#) for residents of non-government-controlled territory who are forced to enter Ukraine through the Russian Federation, for humanitarian travel reasons.

## THE RISKS OF RUSSIAN PASSPORTIZATION IN DONBAS

As was [reported](#) during a presentation of an analytical report of the Eastern Human Rights Group 'Passportization of the Russian Federation in the areas of Donbas occupied by the RF', in 2021, the number of passports issued by Russia in Donbas increased by 700% compared to 2018. One of the purposes of this process is to ensure the participation of 500,000 persons in the elections to the State Duma of the

Russian Federation in 2021. Radio Liberty [explains](#) what Russia uses the election promises for.

On 20 July, the RF Central Election Commission [approved](#) the procedure for [remote e-voting](#) during the upcoming elections to the State Duma. The procedure is for the residents of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions who hold Russian citizenship. According to the decree of the Election Commission, voting registration in the territory of the Russian Federation is not required.

The deputy Head of the President's Administration Dmitrii Kozak [stated](#) in an interview that the issuance of Russian passports to the residents of certain areas of Donbas does not mean that the region will become a part of Russian Federation, and is triggered rather by 'humanitarian reasons'. At the same time, Kozak declared that Russia was ready to 'stand up to protect' the residents of Donbas if the Ukrainian army attempted to liberate the region by military means.

At the OSCE Council session, Evhen Tsymbaliuk, Ukraine's permanent representative at the international organizations in Vienna, [called on](#) the OSCE member states to react to the actions of Russia, describing them as serious violations of Ukraine's sovereignty and of the Minsk agreements.