



STATEMENT BY THE EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY LEADERSHIP GROUP (EASLG)

Twelve Steps Toward Greater Security in Ukraine and the Euro-Atlantic Region

The conflict in and around Ukraine is a tragedy for all affected by the violence. It is a flashpoint for catastrophic miscalculation and is a continuing threat to security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region. A political resolution is fundamental to ending the armed conflict in the Donbas region, to improving prospects for constructive Ukraine-Russia dialogue more broadly including on Crimea, and to improving Euro-Atlantic security. **Action to help those in harm's way and to establish a foundation that resolves the conflict must be taken now to address urgent security, humanitarian, economic, and political concerns.** Such action also will help reduce tensions between Russia and the West and help build a sustainable architecture of mutual security in the Euro-Atlantic region, including enhanced cooperation on nuclear threat reduction.

Recent developments have opened the way for progress. Those changes include in 2019 the following: (1) the mutual release of prisoners and an agreement to define additional areas for disengagement of forces; (2) the October agreement on a process for elections in Donetsk and Luhansk and special status for these regions once the elections are certified as free and fair by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); and (3) the December Paris Summit in the Normandy format between France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine. In Paris, the leaders underscored their common commitment to a sustainable architecture of trust and security in Europe, for which resolving the conflict in Ukraine—including creating political and security conditions to organize local elections—is one of several important steps.

In 2020, a further meeting in the Normandy format, ongoing work of the Trilateral Contact Group, and other diplomatic exchanges provide opportunities to move forward on ending a war that, over the past six years, has killed more than 13,000, wounded more than 25,000 and forced 2.5 million people

from their homes. This opening must not be missed. **The following 12 practical, concrete steps can be taken now** to address urgent security, humanitarian, economic, and political concerns.

SECURITY STEPS

In March 2014, following a request by Ukraine's government and a consensus decision by all 57 OSCE participating states, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) was deployed within Ukraine to foster peace, security, and stability. In September 2014, the SMM began to support the implementation of the Minsk agreements. In the same month, the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination (JCCC) was established by Ukraine and Russia to focus on a ceasefire and stabilization of the contact line, as well as implementation of the Minsk agreements. On December 18, 2017, Russia announced that Russian representatives of the JCCC would leave Ukraine the next day.

Des Browne, Wolfgang Ischinger, Igor Ivanov, Ernest J. Moniz, Sam Nunn, and their respective organizations—the European Leadership Network (ELN), the Munich Security Conference (MSC), the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), and the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI)—work with former and current officials and experts from a group of Euro-Atlantic states and the European Union to test ideas and develop proposals for improving security in areas of existential common interest. The EASLG operates as an independent and informal initiative, with participants who reflect the diversity of the Euro-Atlantic region from the United States, Canada, Russia, and 15 European countries.

STEP 1: Restore the JCCC.

Restoring the JCCC would provide (1) an added capability for implementation of the Minsk agreements; (2) assistance in ensuring a prompt response to violations of the agreements, including response to impediments to the SMM's monitoring and verification; and (3) support for the restoration of critical infrastructure and demining.

STEP 2: Establish a Normandy-format, military-to-military crisis management dialogue.

Leaders of the Normandy-format countries (France, Germany, Russia, and Ukraine—the “N4”) **should direct the establishment of an “N4” military-to-military crisis management dialogue** that could serve, inter-alia, as a mechanism for regular exchanges with respect to Minsk implementation, including as a follow-up and remedy mechanism for Minsk violations, as reported by the SMM. In addition, a new N4 dialogue could support the JCCC and could proceed separately or in parallel with efforts to renew crisis management dialogue at the expert level—both bilateral and multilateral—within the NATO-Russia Council or as a separate working group.¹

STEP 3: Improve unrestricted access and freedom of movement.

Although the security situation in eastern Ukraine has improved, there remains a need to improve the freedom of movement for all civilians, including the SMM. This effort includes more and safer entry-exit checkpoints to build trust and to enable effective monitoring. **All parties should work toward this goal to build on security improvements and to support an irreversible cease-fire**, which is consistent with the Minsk agreements and the conclusions of the Paris N4 Summit supporting the SMM's ability to have unrestricted, safe, and secure access throughout Ukraine for the full implementation of its mandate. Denial of access and the undermining of night time patrols should end.

HUMANITARIAN STEPS

Since 2014, hundreds of people have gone missing as a result of refugee flight, fighting, reprisals, and abductions. Locating missing persons is crucial to creating a long-term settlement of the conflict, reinstating the rule of law, and securing the rights of surviving families. Landmines and explosive remnants of war continue to threaten civilians, restrict freedom of movement, and deter access to infrastructure and jobs. Support for governmental bodies and international organizations working to map and mark dangerous areas and to remove mines in the buffer zone and the line of conflict—

particularly around “disengagement areas” and crossing points—is vital to reducing casualties. That support can also encourage military-to-military dialogue within the JCCC, can energize confidence building, and can enable economic revitalization.

STEP 4: Address the problem of missing persons.

Resolving missing persons cases will require all relevant stakeholders, including human rights organizations and family groups, to cooperate in locating and identifying the missing due to all circumstances across the country. The **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Commission on Missing Persons** could facilitate the process while working with relevant authorities, civil society groups, and stakeholders. The process would be consistent with the Paris N4 Summit and would support the full and unconditional access of international organizations, including the ICRC, to all detained persons.

STEP 5: Plan for and implement humanitarian demining initiatives.

It is essential that all children and adults in eastern Ukraine immediately be taught to understand the risks posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war and to avoid or minimize such risks. Meanwhile, **Ukrainian authorities and the international community could establish a special “Donbas demining” program.** A comprehensive survey of the nature and extent of the problem would add to the effectiveness of those efforts. Such humanitarian demining initiatives are consistent with, and would logically build on, the agreed conclusions of the Paris N4 Summit that support the development and implementation of an updated mine clearance plan for Ukraine. The work of governmental and non-governmental organizations engaged in demining would be aided by permission to use high explosives in this effort.

ECONOMIC STEPS

The armed conflict has led to an economic collapse on both sides of the line of contact. Poverty and underdevelopment are entrenched in eastern Ukraine, taking a heavy toll on pensioners in particular.

STEP 6: Advance reconstruction in the Donbas.

Building on the October 2019 Investment Forum in Mariupol, the Delphi Economic Forum meeting in March 2020 should advance the concept of establishing—with the support of the European Union (EU)—an appropriate international framework for the reconstruction of Donbas, as well as an associated international donor's conference that could include Russia. Such a framework and initiative could

¹ For more information on renewing and deepening crisis management dialogue, see the EASLG statement released at the 2019 Munich Security Conference, available at: https://media.nti.org/documents/EASLG_Statement_Crisis_Management_FINAL.pdf

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leverage crucial assistance in rebuilding critical infrastructure, health, and education. **An essential first step is to conduct a credible needs assessment for the Donbas region to inform a strategy for its social-economic recovery.**

STEP 7: Explore free trade areas.

Free trade areas have been used to revitalize war-torn regions. **Relevant stake-holders should explore on the expert level measures to establish a Ukraine free trade area with both the EU (implementing the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement between the EU and Ukraine) and Russia, as well as focused measures in support of exports.**

STEP 8: Support for a roadmap on sanctions.

A process must be identified for better defining how specific actions in implementation of the Minsk agreements could lead to corresponding changes in sanctions. **Track II work in this area could be an appropriate place to start.**

STEP 9: Address radiological hazards.

Approximately 1,200 radioactive sources—used for medical, industrial, or scientific purposes—are in locations in and around the Donetsk region; some have reached the end of their useful lives, thus posing unique health, safety, and ecological risks. Ecological challenges, such as this one, have been addressed in the Economic Working Group of the Trilateral Contact Group. Removing radiological hazards in the Donbas region would provide important economic (and humanitarian, security, and ecological) benefits and would be a valuable step in confidence-building.

Working with the OSCE, Trilateral Contact Group, and Normandy-format countries, relevant stakeholders should agree on measures to secure and safely transport high-activity disused radioactive sources (cesium, strontium, etc.) out of the Donbas region. Furthermore, measures should be agreed to monitor the safety and security of high-activity radioactive sources currently used for medical or industrial purposes in the Donbas region.

POLITICAL STEPS

The states of the Euro-Atlantic region have yet to define, agree, or implement an approach to security that can ensure peace, independence, and freedom from fear of violence for all. In

the context of its five “guiding principles” about relations with Russia, the EU committed to “selective engagement” in 2016, yet a positive agenda for this engagement also remains elusive. Within Ukraine and between Ukrainians and their neighbors, social shifts are affecting the politics of historical memory and national identity and are raising difficult issues for governments regarding citizenship and language rights—with real effects on politics, economics, and security.

STEP 10: Direct a new dialogue among Euro-Atlantic states about building mutual security.

This new dialogue must be mandated by political leaders and must address core security issues through a dynamic process that directly deals with key divides. Such a dialogue could help deepen cooperation and mutual understanding and could prevent future conflicts. The EASLG can provide a foundation for this work, which should involve the planning and strategy departments of foreign affairs ministries from across the region.

STEP 11: Support and define areas of selective engagement between the EU and Russia.

The EU and Russia should prioritize selective engagement in 2020, including through support of the implementation of the Minsk agreements. They should also take steps in areas where there is a strong common interest (e.g., science and research, cross border and regional cooperation, and cooperation on climate change and the environment). Thus they could recognize that progress can be mutually reinforcing. Existing human and economic ties should be further developed.

STEP 12: Launch a new national dialogue about identity.

A new, inclusive national dialogue across Ukraine is desirable and could be launched as soon as possible. This dialogue should include opinion-makers, top scholars, and internationally recognized experts. Efforts should be made to engage with perspectives from Ukraine’s neighbors, especially Poland, Hungary, and Russia. This dialogue should address themes of history and national memory, language, identity, and minority experiences. It should include tolerance and respect for ethnic and religious minorities—in both domestic and international contexts—in order to increase engagement, inclusiveness, and social cohesion.

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