

Exercise 'utmost restraint' in eastern Ukraine to safeguard civilian life, top UN official urges fighters on the ground

After a lull in fighting in Ukraine over the summer, the last few weeks have seen a sharp rise in civilian deaths, more than half of which are due to landmines and explosive remnants of war, the United Nations top political official said on Tuesday.

"On the ground, continued and unpredictable escalations of hostilities aggravate the climate of insecurity," UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Rosemary A. DiCarlo told the 15-member Security Council.

She said the recent so-called Harvest Ceasefire and Back to School Ceasefire – negotiated by representatives from Ukraine, Russia and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) – clearly showed that the impact of conflict on civilians could be drastically reduced with "sufficient political will and genuine commitment."

"We continue to call upon the parties to ensure the full and immediate implementation of the ceasefire agreements and exercise utmost restraint to protect the civilian population," she stated, urging an immediate withdrawal of heavy weapons from populated areas and protection of civilian infrastructure.

In her briefing, Ms. DiCarlo also drew attention to reports of increased tensions in the Sea of Azov and underscored the importance of the [Minsk Agreements](#), endorsed by the Security Council, for a negotiated peace in eastern Ukraine.

"[We urge] all parties to avoid any unilateral steps that could deepen the divide or depart from of the spirit and letter of the Minsk Agreements," she said, noting in particular the 11 November so-called "leadership" elections announced by separatists of the self-described "Donetsk people's republic" and "Luhansk people's republic".

"Despite Ukraine's objections, media report that preparations are still going ahead," she added, recalling that the agreements address election-related matters "as part of a comprehensive package."

"Any such measures, taken outside Ukraine's constitutional and legal framework, would be incompatible with the Minsk Agreements," she stressed, calling upon all parties to "recommit" to their full implementation and help usher in peace and stability to all of Ukraine.

Severe funding shortage affecting humanitarian response

Also briefing the Security Council, Ursula Mueller, the Deputy UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, said that over 3.5 million people across the region continue to rely on humanitarian assistance and protection.

Challenges, however, persist for relief actors, she continued, noting “unpredictable” access to areas in need as well as severe shortages of funds.

“I appeal to the donors to increase their support for consolidating these humanitarian gains, especially with Ukraine’s harsh winter fast approaching,” she said, stressing that UN agencies and humanitarian partners will continue to work to assist Ukraine’s displaced and conflict-affected people.

In late February 2014, the situation in Ukraine went from political crisis, to violent confrontation and, later became a full-scale conflict in the east, which has claimed the lives of over 3,000 civilians so far.

In April, the Russian Federation annexed and occupied the Crimean Peninsula, and according to the [UN human rights office, OHCHR](#), “continues to apply its laws in violation of international humanitarian law.”

The crisis has also engulfed the highest proportion of elderly people in the world of any conflict-zone, more than 30 per cent.