



## FRANCE

### Topic: Russia-Ukraine crisis

Tensions between Ukraine and Russia have persisted for over seven years now. Indeed, the year 2014 was marked by the annexation of Crimea by Russia after a disputed referendum: On May 11<sup>th</sup> 2014, the Donetsk people's republic (DRP) and the Luhansk people's republic (LPR) declare their own independence following a referendum which was contested by Ukraine and the international community (included Russia). The aim of this annexation was, according to the Russian president Vladimir Putin, to protect the rights of Russian citizens present in Crimea region. In consequence, an armed conflict between these two countries broke out. This has led to, in February 2015, a meeting between France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine to negotiate and to implement the Minsk Protocol. The spirit of this agreement was to jointly advance the security situation on the ground and the political process. But the crisis persists because of the lack of political will on the part of the parties to implement their commitments. Regular tensions continue to fuel the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

On 9<sup>th</sup> December 2019, France welcomed a summit of heads of state and government. This summit allowed to define a certain number of restrictions to improve the political situation and to facilitate the implementation of the Minsk Protocol whether it is the ceasefire or an exchange of conflict prisoners.

During this crisis, France is mobilized to achieve an immediate ceasefire on the part of Russia. With a complete solidarity with the Ukrainians, France has deployed several sanctions against Russia to influence the choices of Vladimir Poutine: isolating Russia in the international community, supporting the fight against impunity, keeping an open diplomatic channel and a firm dialogue with Vladimir Poutine was one of the pressure points led by France.

The principal issue regarding France was the human crisis caused by these tensions. Indeed, several million Ukrainians are leaving their homes to escape the fighting and bombing. Some are taking refuge within the country or outside Ukraine's borders. Faced with this human crisis, France released 100 million EUR to finance human equipment (drugs, tents, blankets...), 12 French humanitarian convoys have arrived in Ukraine in neighboring countries, French companies and more than 175 local authorities have contributed more than €3 million.

In a war there is no winner. We know that touching the Ukrainian border is a risk of generalized war. This crisis has gone on far too long, solutions must be found. In a war there is a choice to be made between proof of force or proof of negotiation and since the beginning of this crisis, the proof of forces between Russia and Ukraine has been established. Even if negotiations and protocols have been organized, it sometimes seems unequal and mostly

ignored. This was usually followed by armed conflicts and no solution were ever found. The way to peace is discussion. Using French military force would turn this crisis into a nuclear war. The French government should request a Russian withdrawal. It cannot be acceptable that borders be moved by force. Similarly, imposing sanctions on the Russians is not a solution that promotes peace since none of the sanctions seem to be effective. So, a discussion in relation to the European borders must be set up. Indeed, since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia has been trying to regain power and no framework for discussion has been put in place regarding their dislocation and country borders. The solution is a border conference within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, of which the United States, Russia and the European countries are members, to discuss what the Russians want on the European continent and about the French security. This will also allow a homogeneous discussion between the different world powers. Indeed, the United States is at the heart of this problem since it is even the leader of NATO. At each conflict, a discussion on European security is led by Mr. Biden and Vladimir Putin and all European countries are excluded. So, setting up such a conference would be a way of overcoming this inequality and hoping it will be another step towards a peaceful world