



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°853 Vienna, 17 May 2017

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States remain concerned about the highly volatile security situation in eastern Ukraine which has regrettably impaired the SMM's ability to monitor developments on the ground. As reported by the Mission, the SMM's temporary precautionary measures to enhance the security of the Mission members affected its monitoring of the ceasefire and impeded its monitoring and verification of withdrawal of weapons. We are concerned that - despite restricted monitoring – the SMM registered an increase by more than 20 per cent in the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons over the last week compared with the previous week which has led recently to several incidents with a high number of civilian casualties. Furthermore, the SMM continued to observe large concentration of weapons in violation of the respective withdrawal lines in non-government controlled areas. The presence of such weapons is a display of disregard for the Minsk agreements and we deeply regret that no concrete steps were taken to remedy these violations.

We therefore repeat our call on all sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect of the ceasefire, the withdrawal of all Minsk-proscribed weapons, complete disengagement and to ensure comprehensive action on mine clearance. These are important steps toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We expect all sides to live up to their responsibility to mark, fence and clear areas contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance, and we once again underline the need for the JCCC to fulfil its coordination role as laid out in the TCG decision on mine clearance. The observation of new mines and unexploded ordnance in the security zone and populated areas on both sides of the contact line as well as the readiness of separatists to lay a new mine field near Zhovte, as

reported by the SMM, stress the need for immediate action on comprehensive mine clearance.

We condemn the continued incidents where SMM monitors are threatened, harassed or intimidated or prevented from fulfilling their mandate. In this regard, we condemn the incident of 8 May near Sosnivske, where an armed man demanded the SMM to withdraw and fired one shot close to the SMM patrol. We once again urge Russia to exercise its influence over the separatists it backs to ensure that intimidation ends and accountability is safeguarded. We reiterate that the SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine. We expect the JCCC step up and respond rapidly and effectively when called upon by the SMM to address impediments facing the Mission. We condemn written instructions given to “DPR” members to hinder and block SMM patrols which contradict provisions in PC.DEC/1117 and the Addendum of 29 September 2015 for the SMM’s safe and secure access. We urge Russia to take responsibility and exercise its influence over the separatists to withdraw such instructions.

We call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full. We underline Russia’s responsibility in this regard and once again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet these commitments in full. We reiterate our deep concern regarding information about the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia in the conflict zone. In this respect we note the SMM report dated 15 May which reported the presence of an Orlan-10 UAV over the separatist controlled territory on 13 May. This UAV is only in service within the Russian Armed Forces. In this context we note that the Russian Federation has yet to give an adequate explanation of the presence of such unique equipment in Ukrainian territory or how such equipment, which requires specialised training, is being operated. We urge the Russian Federation again to provide clarification on the presence of this equipment in Ukraine. We call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists. The ceasefire must be respected. All Minsk-regulated weapons must be withdrawn. All foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries must be removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential.

We recall our unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and call upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to strictly observe these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilise the situation and reverse moves that contravene these principles. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation and we will not recognise it.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.