



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1111
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EU statement in Response to Briefings by the Special Representative in Ukraine of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Martin Sajdik and the Chief Monitor of the OSCE SMM, Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan

We warmly welcome Ambassador Apakan and Ambassador Sajdik back to the Permanent Council and thank them for their briefings. We also appreciate the report by the Chief Monitor on the activities of the SMM. We reiterate the important role the SMM and you personally, Ambassador Apakan, are playing. We reaffirm our full support for the SMM's impartial reporting and the monitors deployed in the field, often under difficult circumstances. We also thank you, Ambassador Sajdik, and reiterate our strong support for your tireless efforts in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

Mr Chair, we once again express our full support to the work of the Trilateral Contact Group, its working groups and their coordinators. Further measures must be taken to enhance the security situation, and we urge the sides in the Security Working Group to agree on a complete disengagement plan. We call on the sides in the Political Working Group to agree without further delay on the modalities of local elections in certain parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. We reiterate our firm position that conditions for ODIHR monitoring, including ensuring security and access, must be met. We call on the sides in the Economic Working Group to agree on further steps to restore basic infrastructure. Finally, we urge the sides in the Humanitarian Working Group to agree on the release and exchange of all remaining prisoners and illegally detained persons and on removing the severe restrictions imposed on the delivery of humanitarian relief to separatist-held areas.

Mr Chair, the EU is deeply concerned by the continuing high levels of violence along the line of contact. In particular, the recent sharp rise in fighting around Stanytsia Luhanska bridge has driven the number of ceasefire violations in Luhansk region to the highest level in over a year. We deplore the use of heavy weapons and indiscriminate shelling in residential areas which the SMM continues to observe, and which often leads to civilian casualties. We reiterate the Chief Monitor's call on all sides to adhere to a full and sustainable ceasefire and take immediate steps to disengage and verifiably withdraw all Minsk-regulated weapons. This is necessary in order to ensure a sustainable political solution based on OSCE principles and commitments.

Every week in the Permanent Council we call for full, safe and unhindered access for the SMM throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border, and for those responsible for incidents involving threats and obstructions of SMM monitors and equipment to be held to account for their actions. Regrettably, SMM monitors and equipment continue to face severe obstacles. This week saw the loss of another long-range UAV and attacks on mini vehicles. Over the course of July, almost 90% of restrictions on the SMM's access occurred in separatist-held areas. More specifically, the Russia-backed separatists have been systematically blocking the SMM's attempts to access the Stanytsia Luhanska bridge, only giving the SMM delayed and conditional access on 16 and 17 July. We reiterate that this must stop and that those responsible for these actions should not be allowed to act with impunity, and we call for the swift and full investigation of all incidents. The SMM should also be allowed without further delay to open all planned Forward Patrol Bases and Hubs. Full, safe and unhindered access for the SMM throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border, is a prerequisite for the SMM to fulfil its mandate and its role as foreseen in the Minsk agreements. It is also unacceptable that the mission continues to have no access to Crimea.

We welcome the SMM's recent deployment of a liaison officer to the JCCC and note the positive change in dynamics highlighted in your report. It is important that the JCCC cooperate fully with the SMM to ensure full, safe and unhindered access. To this end, we are interested in hearing your assessment, Ambassador Apakan, of the functioning of the JCCC, and the cooperation between the JCCC and the SMM. Recent SMM reports highlight the urgency with which this is still needed and we urge

the sides in the Security Working Group to identify and take steps for improving the effectiveness of the JCCC.

We welcome the SMM's efforts to improve its management and encourage them to follow this through. We also welcome the decision to create the new Ethics Adviser post, the recently adopted Standards of Conduct, and the new Gender Action Plan. We look forward to their thorough implementation, as well as regular follow up on progress.

We remain firm in our 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 yet again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet those commitments in full. Moreover, we again 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 and foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential. We reiterate our deep concern about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in separatist-held areas. The duration of the European Union's economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to recognise 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 to the Russian Federation and we will not recognise it.

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

* Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.