



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Special Permanent Council Nr 1038 Vienna, 5 February 2015

EU Statement in Response to the Report by the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome the Chief Monitor, Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan, back to the Permanent Council. The Special Monitoring Mission is playing a very significant and valuable role through its presence on the ground and its impartial and objective monitoring and reporting. The SMM has a vital role in facilitating the implementation of important aspects of the Minsk agreements. We continue to strongly support the SMM and we will support an extension of the Mission when its mandate expires next month. During the reporting period, the SMM has expanded the number of monitors and significantly improved its operational capacity. The EU and its Member States will continue to provide qualified staff, appropriate equipment and financial contributions.

Mr Chairman, the SMM's reports provide a unique insight into the recent escalation of hostilities in parts of eastern Ukraine. They clearly demonstrate attempts by Russian-backed separatists to further destabilise the situation and to expand the area they control in breach of the Minsk agreements. We note the many observations of substantial amounts of heavy military equipment in areas controlled by the separatists. They include advanced multiple rocket launcher systems, surface-to-air missiles, tanks and heavy artillery. These observations correspond to evidence of continued and growing support given to the separatists by Russia. We also note SMM's reports about the many attacks by separatists on strategic sites and cities adjacent to "the line of contact". These days thousands of civilians are trapped in Debaltseve under constant shelling by the separatists attempting to take control. From the reports we acquire an insight in the severe impact of the crisis on civilians. Of particular concern is indiscriminate shelling of

densely populated areas, wherever it happens, as well as the use of such areas, including in Donetsk city, to conduct military operations. We continue to condemn such acts.

We underline the importance of the investigations of specific incidents conducted by the SMM. The SMM's spot reports on the recent tragic incidents in Mariupol, Volnovakha, Donetsk and Luhansk city provide the international community with an impartial, factual and timely assessment. We urge all participating States to refrain from calling the impartiality of the SMM into doubt. We commend the SMM for its media and communication activities that contribute to objective media coverage and counter misinformation and propaganda.

Mr Chairman, we regret once again the lack of progress towards substantial and effective OSCE monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. Re-establishing Ukrainian control of its borders remains essential. Border and ceasefire monitoring remain closely interlinked and mutually dependent. We recall that the Minsk protocol called for continuous monitoring of the border by the OSCE. The SMM Concept Paper on Monitoring the Ukrainian-Russian State Border provides a good basis and should be implemented without delay.

The safety and security of SMM monitors is of paramount importance. We express our deep concern about numerous security incidents that have directly involved SMM monitors. We acknowledge the comprehensive security measures undertaken by the SMM. We welcome the many security briefings and updates provided to the participating States as well the visit to the SMM by national security experts last month.

We reiterate our call on all parties to ensure free and safe access for SMM monitors and UAVs, including in all parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts as well as along the Ukrainian-Russian state border. We regret that the separatists continue to limit the access of the SMM to certain areas. We also regret the continuing attempts at disrupting the use of UAVs by shooting and "jamming" and we call for an expansion of the flight area over separatist controlled areas. It is unacceptable that the SMM has no access to Crimea despite the urgent need for

international monitoring of the deteriorating human rights situation in the illegally annexed Crimea and Sevastopol. We urge the SMM to continue to report on the situation in Crimea based on interviews with activists and IDPs and other sources.

Mr Chairman, we commend Ambassador Apakan and his staff for their outstanding and courageous efforts in a most volatile and dangerous environment. We wish Ambassador Apakan and his staff success in their very important endeavours.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member 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.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.