



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council N°1093  
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**EU Statement in Response to the Report by Chief Observer  
of the OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian checkpoints  
on the Russian-Ukrainian border**

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The European Union warmly welcomes the Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian checkpoints, Mr Simon Eugster, back to the Permanent Council. We thank him for his report and, this being his last appearance before the Council as Chief Observer, his dedicated service.

Despite its limited mandate and size, the Mission continues to provide evidence of Russian support for the separatists. This includes regular reports of a high number of people, more than 2,250 during the reporting period, crossing the border wearing military style clothes and camouflage, some with separatist insignia. We once again note a reported minivan marked "Cargo 200" crossing the border, suggesting the return to Russia of military personnel killed in action.

We reiterate our deep regret that Russian so-called "humanitarian convoys" continue to cross the border without proper control or inspection by Ukrainian authorities. On 18 February, a 48<sup>th</sup> Russian convoy was observed by the Observer Mission. These convoys continue without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities and in clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and without fundamental international humanitarian principles being observed.

Recent developments and deteriorating security situation have again underlined the importance of border monitoring in light of information about the continued presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia in separatist-held areas. Effective and comprehensive monitoring of the Russian-Ukrainian state border is an integral part of a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments, which re-establishes full Ukrainian control over its sovereign territory, including the border. We recall that the Minsk Protocol calls for permanent monitoring of the

Ukrainian-Russian border and verification by the OSCE with the creation of security zones in the border regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Moreover, the Minsk Package of Measures includes a commitment to reinstate full Ukrainian control over its entire border.

The Observer Mission's very limited mandate and its small size does not provide for a comprehensive border monitoring. We regret that the Russian Federation continues to resist an expansion of the Observer Mission despite the calls from the overwhelming majority of participating States for a significant expansion to all border crossings currently not under control of the Ukrainian government as well as monitoring between these border crossings. Furthermore, such an expansion should be supported by and coordinated with border monitoring on the Ukrainian side of the border by the SMM, enabled by the establishment of further Forward Patrol Bases and Patrol Hubs. This requires unfettered access to areas of Ukraine's border currently not under its control and we again call on Russia to use its influence with the separatists in this regard.

We are grateful to the OSCE Secretariat's Conflict Prevention Center for putting forward proposals on how border monitoring, both from the sides of the Observer Mission and the SMM, could be improved. We note that all or some of these measures would not require amendments to the Missions' mandates and look forward to continued constructive discussions on these suggestions.

We call on Russia to remove the access restrictions at the Gukovo border crossing that limit the Mission's staff to a small fraction of the area of the crossing point, and ensure availability of convenient positioning for monitors at the Donetsk BCP to be able to observe relevant details of the border crossing. We urge them also to agree the other small measures to improve the effectiveness of monitoring set out by the Chief Observer in this and previous reports.

Finally, notwithstanding our wish to see a substantial expansion of the Mission, we were prepared to join consensus this week on a timely renewal of the Mission's mandate. We strongly regret that Russia has decided to obstruct that extension before the recess, which may complicate the efforts of the Chair to find a replacement for the Chief Observer, and call on them to join consensus without further delay.

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.