



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1046 Vienna, 26 March 2015

EU Statement in response to OSCE SMM Chief Monitor Ambassador Apakan and CiO Special Representative Ambassador Tagliavini

The European Union and its member states thank Ambassador Apakan and Ambassador Tagliavini for their important updates on developments in regard to the crisis in and around Ukraine. The presentations confirm that we are in a critical phase of the implementation of the Minsk agreements. We welcome the Normandy format meeting yesterday in Paris at the level of political directors and call upon all parties to the Minsk Agreements to implement their commitments.

We are very concerned about persistent fighting in certain areas as mentioned by Ambassador Apakan. That includes the area around Donetsk airport and in particular east of Mariupol where the fighting has intensified in and around the town of Shyrokyne in recent days. This is a clear violation of the ceasefire under the Minsk agreements. We join the OSCE Chairman and Ambassador Apakan in calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities and support efforts to secure a local ceasefire that would allow for delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians. The ceasefire must be fully observed as stipulated in the Minsk package. We repeat our call on Russia to use its influence over the separatists to fully implement their commitments.

We note that there is a decrease in the use of heavy weapons as reported by the SMM. While we welcome this development we must also note with deep regret that the SMM continues to observe heavy weapons and the use of heavy weapons in certain areas, including not least in areas controlled by the separatists. That includes the use of artillery, mortar, heavy machine guns, anti-tank missiles and battle tanks. We remain deeply concerned that the SMM has still not received the baseline information that would allow for systematic verification of the withdrawal of heavy weapons nor does it enjoy free and unhindered access.

Mr Chairman, we are concerned by the fact that the SMM is experiencing increasing restrictions on its monitoring activities. Recently, the SMM has experienced further restrictions to its access to the Ukrainian-Russian border area and to the separatist controlled areas in the southern part of Donetsk. We note that the so-called “DPR” demands to accompany all SMM patrols in the areas they control. We also note that occasionally the SMM is prevented from crossing checkpoints controlled by the Ukrainian army. We underline that unconditional access and freedom of movement for the monitors is vital for the SMM, in order to independently and comprehensively monitor and verify developments. We would appreciate if Ambassador Apakan could elaborate on how this issue could be addressed.

We also reiterate the paramount importance we attach to the safety and security of monitors. We note with concern the extremely close call that the team in Pisky experienced earlier this week. The harassment, threats and warning shots SMM monitors experience are unacceptable and must stop. We also regret the continuing “jamming” of the UAVs.

Mr Chairman, we once again express our strong support to the SMM. We commend the SMM for its response to the Minsk package and for the efforts to enhance its capacity. The work of the SMM is of vital importance. The EU and its member states will continue to provide qualified staff, appropriate equipment and financial contributions.

We also express our strong support to the work of Ambassador Tagliavini in the Trilateral Contact Group of Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE Chairmanship. As agreed in Paris yesterday, the Group must play an important role in promoting the implementation of the Minsk agreements, including by establishing the foreseen working groups. Further information and updates on this specific element of the on-going work would be valuable. We call on the parties to support the efforts of Ambassador Tagliavini.

We wish Ambassador Apakan and Ambassador Tagliavini success in their difficult

endeavours. They can continue to count on our strong support.

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, MONACO 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.