



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 999 Vienna, 8 May 2014

EU Statement on Current Security Challenges in the OSCE Area and OSCE Engagement with Ukraine

Today's session takes place against the backdrop of intensive efforts of the Chairman-in-Office to achieve a political solution. We recognise the Chairman-in-Office's committed engagement towards that end.

The European Union would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the statement of European Council President Van Rompuy last night following his meeting with Chairperson-in-Office Minister Burkhalter on the situation in Ukraine.

"I take note of President Putin's recent statements signalling a willingness to de-escalate the situation, including his call to refrain from holding a referendum in the Eastern part of Ukraine and the stated withdrawal of Russian troops from the borders of Ukraine. Likewise, do I take note of and welcome the Ukrainian Governments' progress in implementing the Geneva Joint Statement including its efforts to reach out to all parts of Ukrainian society. A genuine national dialogue and the cessation of acts of violence and provocations are essential elements in advancing towards a political solution. I reconfirmed the European Union's support to the work of the OSCE in Ukraine, including the Special Monitoring Mission."

The European Union welcomes last Saturday's release of the seven military inspectors from OSCE participating States and their Ukrainian escort team conducting an OSCE Vienna Document inspection. We are grateful to all those who have contributed to their release, not least to the deputy of the Special Monitoring Mission Mr Etherington and his team that worked tirelessly and

under very difficult conditions to set them free. We hope this positive development, one of the few from this part of Ukraine, will be followed by the release of all other hostages held by illegally armed groups.

The EU expresses its strong support to the ongoing efforts of the OSCE. As the crisis escalates, the need for measures that contribute to stability and security is becoming still more crucial. We continue to believe that the OSCE should use its full potential, including all relevant politico-military instruments, in the current situation. We are of the view that the OSCE could play a valuable role in facilitating a broad national and Ukrainian-led dialogue to strengthen national cohesion.

The worsening situation in Eastern and Southern Ukraine, as also described in reports of the Special Monitoring Mission, is of deep concern to us. Groups of militias and armed individuals are increasing in number and expanding their activities to still more cities seizing public buildings, mounting roadblocks and shutting whole towns and communities off from the rest of the country. The number of reports of torture, kidnappings, killings and violent clashes are increasing. In the last days these groups have taken control of several public buildings in Donetsk and Luhansk, including the local television centre. Such groups purport to be “peaceful activists” and yet can be seen openly carrying Kalashnikovs and rocket-propelled grenades. We also repeat our grave concern about the build-up of Russian troops right next to the Ukrainian border with exercises being carried out. We reiterate our demand to Russia to call back its troops and cease any actions aimed at destabilising Ukraine.

We are deeply concerned about the expansion of violence and provocations to other parts of Ukraine that were previously largely untouched by events in Eastern Ukraine. Last Friday, in the city of Odessa parallel gatherings of football fans supporting Ukraine’s unity and of anti-Maidan protesters developed into violent clashes instigated by provocateurs that led to many deaths and injured. We are deeply saddened by this tragedy. We welcome the launching of an investigation by the Ukrainian authorities into these events and their intention to

involve international experts. This investigation is urgently needed and should be independent.

We reiterate our call for restraint and for an end to provocations and aggression. We want to see the Russian Federation join in in the call to see an immediate end to these actions. The occasion of the upcoming commemorative days or the announced local and illegitimate referenda should not be used by anyone to further escalate the situation. We note that the Ukrainian government has resumed its campaign in order to reinstate law and order and protect civilians, and we commend the government for pursuing these operations in a measured manner.

We are very concerned that the Geneva Joint Statement is not achieving its objective to restore stability. All signatories to the Statement must therefore reinforce their efforts in view of its implementation. The EU is fully committed to this Statement and will continue to do its utmost. In line with our previous statements in the Permanent Council, we welcome the substantive steps taken by Ukraine and call on other parties, in particular the Russian Federation, also to take concrete action in implementing the Geneva Joint Statement.

We note with increasing concern the incidents that have occurred regarding security and access for OSCE staff, including observers, and inspectors under the OSCE Vienna Document, and we call for all of them to have safe and free access throughout Ukraine to fulfil their mandate. Safety and access for the many election observers before and during the presidential elections on 25 May will be of crucial importance.

The EU reiterates its strong support for Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, and calls upon Russia to do so as well. 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. We also reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to immediately withdraw the mandate of the Federation Council to use military force on Ukrainian soil.

We continue to express our concern about the situation in Crimea, including in regard to human rights and rights of persons belonging to national minorities. We are concerned about reports that the leader of the Crimean Tatar community, Mr Dzhemilev, was denied access to Crimea last Saturday, provoking anger and frustration within the Crimean Tatar community, as well as about the warning extended to the head of Mejlis Refat Chubarov by the Crimea “Prosecutor” that Mejlis may be declared illegal for “extremist actions”. We also regret the announcement by the Crimean “Prosecutor” that she has sent a request to the relevant agencies to open criminal cases against protestors who gathered to call for Mr Dzhemilev to be allowed into Crimea. We also express our concern about the violent attack on Mr Egiz, member of the Mejlis, in Simferopol on May 6. The authorities in effective control of Crimea remain responsible for the human rights of all persons residing on the peninsula, including rights of persons belonging to national minorities. We note that especially the Crimean Tatars and the Ukrainian community are in a precarious position as underlined by the High Commissioner on Human Rights on a number of occasions.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA* and MONTENEGRO*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidates ALBANIA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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