



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°844 Vienna, 8 February 2017

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States are deeply concerned by the unprecedented escalation in the Avdiivka area last week which led to numerous casualties and fatalities, and considerable damage to infrastructure as most recently reported by the SMM in the spot report of 3rd February. The 29 January marked another sad record with the highest number of ceasefire violations yet registered by the SMM in a single day. Moreover, other known hotspots saw an increased level of violence, underlining the extremely tense and unpredictable situation. Thousands of civilians, including children, remain the ultimate victims of this upsurge in fighting. They suffer from shelling, damage to and destruction of their homes and essential infrastructure and are left to struggle through a harsh winter without basic utilities and vital humanitarian aid. We welcome the decisive role of the SMM and support their efforts, together with the JCCC, to allow for much needed repair of critical infrastructure. We deplore the deaths of civilians caused by shelling during this escalation of fighting and call on the sides to take all steps necessary to prevent civilian casualties.

In order to avoid a further deterioration and a humanitarian crisis we once again urge the sides to fully adhere to the ceasefire, verifiably disengage and withdraw Minsk-proscribed weapons. These are necessary steps in order to ensure a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. In particular we note that the Trilateral Contact Group Statement of 1 February called for the withdrawal of all Minsk proscribed weapons by 5 February and we urgently call on the sides to abide by their commitments in this regard.

The European Union and its Member States condemn in the strongest terms the targeting and intimidation of SMM monitors. We deplore the most recent hostile events in separatist-controlled Debaltseve and Amvrosiivka, where the SMM mini-UAVs spotted 45 stationary military-type trucks, and near Kalynove where separatists shot at the SMM. The SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, in particular to the disengagement areas and also along the Ukrainian-Russian State border. We note with concern that the SMM continues to face restrictions to its freedom of movement at the disengagement areas and beyond.

We note that the SMM was again able to conduct only very limited monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. In the period of 23-29 January, the SMM was able to visit the border in areas not controlled by the Government only seven times, and to conduct only short visits - because of delays at successive checkpoints, poor road conditions, adverse weather, limited daylight hours and long distance. We underline the need to extend the SMM's presence through the opening of patrol bases near border areas to enhance its monitoring capacity and regret that those in effective control of these areas continue not to provide the necessary security guarantees to this end.

We 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 once again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet these commitments in full. We reiterate our deep concern regarding information about the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia in the conflict zone. We 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. All foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries must be removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential.

We recall our unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and call upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to strictly observe 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 by the Russian Federation and we will not recognise it.

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, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members 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, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.