



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council N° 1198 Vienna, 18 October 2018

EU Statement in response to the Report of the Chief Observer of the Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk, Ambassador Gyorgy Varga

Ambassador Varga, the EU welcomes you to the Permanent Council and thanks you for your report which was received well in advance of today's Permanent Council. We thank you for that. We commend you and your team for your hard work to implement the mandate of the Observer Mission.

We are also grateful for the informal meeting that took place yesterday and we would encourage you to continue such meetings.

The European Union finds the border monitoring on the Russian-Ukrainian State border of vital importance. Effective and comprehensive monitoring of this border is an integral part of a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Such a sustainable political solution must re-establish full Ukrainian control over its sovereign territory, including the border. We recall that the Minsk Protocol calls for permanent monitoring of the border and verification by the OSCE and that the Minsk Package of Measures includes a commitment to reinstate full Ukrainian control over its entire international border as part of the foreseen sequence of security and political steps. In a context where the SMM is systematically denied access to large parts of the Ukraine-Russia border, the work of your mission becomes even more important.

In your report, you underline that the freedom of movement of the observer teams within the border checkpoints continue to be restricted

while the use of observation tools such as binoculars or cameras remain prohibited. These restrictions leads to blind spots, as you say, for the observer teams, which we deeply regret. We also regret that the Russian Federation continues to resist an expansion of the Mission. We reiterate our call for a significant expansion of the Mission to all border crossings on the Russia-Ukraine state border currently not under control of the Ukrainian government as well as between these border crossings and we would support a Ministerial Council decision in Milan on this. The mandate of the mission is currently very limited and its small size of personnel does not provide for comprehensive monitoring even of two checkpoints. In this context, we note that on the night of 7-8 August, the 4-5 September and again on the evening of 10-11 October, an SMM long-range UAV observed convoys of trucks entering Ukraine from the Russian Federation outside official border crossing facilities and without the consent of Ukrainian authorities.

We welcome the exchange of information between the Observer Mission and the SMM and we encourage the continuation of this practice and the further development of the cooperation between the two missions.

We regret that so-called “humanitarian convoys” continue to enter into Ukrainian territory without consent from the Ukrainian government and we are thankful for the SPOT reports you release concerning this violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. We recall that the Minsk agreements foresee that humanitarian aid will be delivered through an international mechanism.

We acknowledge that the shortness of every mandate cycle puts administrative strain on you and your team. We therefore welcome that the mandate cycle has been extended to four months.

Finally, we would be grateful if you could share plans for the upcoming activities of the Mission.

Thank you.

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 UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA 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.