



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°845 Vienna, 15 February 2017

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States remain deeply concerned by the tense situation in eastern Ukraine, in particular in the areas of Avdiivka and Yasynuvata. Despite the decrease in ceasefire violations compared with the sharp deterioration last week, the level of violence remains high and immediate steps are needed to de-escalate the situation. In particular, we remain concerned by the negative impact of the fighting on the civilians suffering from shelling, damage to and destruction of their homes and essential infrastructure. We applaud the decisive role of the SMM and support their efforts together with the JCCC, and we commend the facilitation of local ceasefires which allowed for crucial repairs of utility infrastructure.

In line with the Trilateral Contact Group Statement of 1 February and calls by the SMM 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.

We note with concern that the SMM continues to face restrictions to its freedom of movement at the disengagement areas and beyond. Conditional access, such as the searching of SMM vehicles by armed men at the non-government controlled checkpoint near Olenivka and the 70 minute delay at a separatist check-point near Maiorsk, is also an unacceptable impediment to the mission. 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 continue to be deeply concerned by the denial of access by the separatists to more than 400 km of the border. We note that the SMM was again able to conduct only very limited monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. 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.

Fighting in eastern Ukraine has persisted for almost three years, claiming the lives of at least 10,000 people. Let us be very clear: This tragedy could not have occurred without the Russian Federation's continued and extensive financial and military support for the separatists. Russian denials of responsibility distort the facts.

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 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.