



EUROPEAN UNION
OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°893
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EU Statement on the Security situation in and around Ukraine

Madame Chairperson, the European Union and its Member States remain concerned by the volatile security situation in the conflict zone. Civilians continue to bear the greatest toll of the conflict as they face risks to their lives and homes. Noting that the east of Ukraine has become one of the most densely mined areas in the world, we fully share Ambassador Apakan's call, following the TCG meeting on 19 September, stressing the importance of "humanitarian demining" and a systematic approach to it. We reiterate our call on all sides to disengage, withdraw heavy weapons and step up efforts on comprehensive mine action, in order to ensure a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire as an important step toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

Madame Chairperson, the continued systematic attempts to blind the SMM and its technical equipment in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations further add to our concerns. Over the past week (10-16 September) in addition to restrictions posed by mines and unexploded ordnance, the SMM's freedom of movement was restricted 26 times - all in non-government-controlled areas. Members of Russia-backed armed formations continued to deny the SMM access on a daily basis to Verkhnochyrovsk for the second week in a row, as well as passage through checkpoints near Zaichenko and Novoazovsk. Moreover, the SMM's access to border areas, including at Novoazovsk, Dovzhanske, Izvaryne and Leonove, was denied by members of Russia-backed armed formations. Such behaviour gives rise to serious concerns, especially in the context of previous SMM observations of Russian convoys crossing illegally the international border and Russia's opposition to a substantial expansion of the OSCE Border Observation Mission.

We repeat that the SMM mandate calls for full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine including along the Ukrainian-Russian border and on the Crimean peninsula. Any restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement as well as

targeting and obstruction of the SMM's technical equipment are unacceptable and must stop.

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 within its internationally recognised borders, and call upon Russia to do likewise. 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 the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to 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 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.