



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°868 Vienna, 15 November 2017

EU Statement on the Security situation in and around Ukraine

1. The European Union and its Member States express once more their deep concern regarding the volatile security situation in eastern Ukraine. The continued high level of ceasefire violations, including the twofold increase in the use of weapons that should have been withdrawn according to the Minsk agreements, is especially worrying and requires urgent action by all sides to reverse this dangerous trend, which as briefed by Mr Hug on 13 November 2017, has a direct correlation with the numbers of civilian casualties. In that regard the report of nine civilian casualties last week, including two deaths - one of whom was a 9 year old boy - is deeply regrettable. Greater effort and commitment is needed in order to fully respect the ceasefire and ensure that civilians are afforded proper protection. We call on all sides to take seriously their commitments. This includes the disengagement of forces, the withdrawal of heavy weapons to verifiable storage areas and the marking, fencing and clearing of mines, as foreseen in the framework decision of the Trilateral Contact Group
2. We condemn the continued intimidation of and interference with SMM patrols, including the recent attack on SMM monitors and their equipment on 8 November in non-government-controlled Pikuzy. Additionally, an armed separatist denied the SMM access to a compound near Khrustalnyi, and armed persons prevented the conduct of a mid-range UAV flight near separatist-controlled Vasylivka, citing the need to gain permission from their superiors. We call on the sides and the JCCC to immediately investigate these incidents and take appropriate measures to prevent reoccurrence. Active restrictions on the SMM were reported eight times by Russia-backed separatists in the previous week. This behaviour, both by persons on the ground and by Russia-backed separatist chains of command, is unacceptable and must stop. The SMM and its technical equipment must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, in line with existing agreements, and we call upon Russia to do more to

ensure that the SMM's freedom of movement is not impeded.

3. We note and welcome the efforts of the SMM and JCCC to facilitate repairs to civilian property and infrastructure. This shows that, where there is a will, it is possible to provide for the safety of workers and take steps that improve the lives of the local population. At the same time however, damage – including to hospitals - is frequently caused by shelling and other heavy weapons. We call upon all sides to restrain from the indiscriminate use of weapons. We are also concerned about the deterioration of the condition of the bridge at Stanytsia-Luhanska, which, according to SMM reports could collapse at any moment. We call on all sides to reach an agreement such that these, and other critical repairs, can be carried out.
4. Madame Chairperson, the presence of mines and unexploded ordnance continue to be a significant restriction on the monitoring ability of the SMM and pose a grave and indiscriminate threat to civilians. Some limited marking and de-mining activity has been reported recently, however we urge all sides to do more to implement their commitments to correctly mark, fence and clear areas contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance. Greater efforts in this regard will, among other things, go towards removing the standing limitations on the SMM's freedom of movement, which the presence of mines and UXO is so often a factor.
5. 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.
6. 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 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.