



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°861 Vienna, 13 September 2017

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#### EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

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1. The European Union and its Member States express once more their deep concern regarding the volatile security situation in eastern Ukraine. We welcome the 25 August ceasefire and the decrease in violations. We also note that many violations continue to involve the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons. As reported during the briefing by the SMM on 4 September, the vast majority of civilian casualties are caused by shelling and it is therefore imperative to eliminate ceasefire violations altogether. We urge all sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect of the ceasefire, the withdrawal of all Minsk-proscribed weapons and continuation of the disengagement process.
2. We welcome the re-opening of the Forward Patrol Base in Stanytsia Luhanska in August, which will further enhance the SMM's monitoring capability. However, the SMM's activities continue to be severely hampered on a regular basis, for example recently in Novolaspa. Furthermore we note that the Thematic Report distributed on 6 September records that the overwhelming majority of cases occur in areas not controlled by the Government. We echo the Chief Monitor's comments from 6 September in which he said that SMM freedom of movement was critical to the execution of its mandate and that restrictions and impediments undermine efforts to foster peace, stability and security in Ukraine. Without proper and unrestricted monitoring by the SMM, there cannot be a verified improvement of the security situation.
3. We repeat our condemnation of the continuing intimidation, threats and restrictions faced by the SMM monitors, nearly all of which occur in non-government controlled areas. We condemn actions such as that on 28 August

when a member of one of the Russia-backed separatist groups prevented the SMM from flying a UAV and also said he had orders to fire at any UAVs he saw. Such actions, and direct armed threats against members of the SMM, show a blatant disregard for the safety of SMM personnel and their ability to fulfil their mandate. The continued inadequate response to such incidents creates an environment of impunity that only encourages further threats and intimidation of SMM monitors. It is high time that those responsible are held accountable and brought to justice.

4. It is extremely worrying to read in the SMM's report of 6 September that, in most cases, the JCCC is unable or unwilling to provide a robust response to violations of the Mission's freedom of movement, seeming instead to accept restrictions and impediments, particularly in non-government controlled areas. We expect the JCCC to respond rapidly and effectively when called upon by the SMM to address such impediments facing the Mission, and we reiterate once again that the SMM and its technical equipment must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine. We urge Russia to exercise its influence over the separatists it backs, to ensure the SMM's safe access and to prevent such impediments.
5. Madame Chairperson, one week after the release of the forensic report on the tragic incident of 23 April 2017, which concluded there had been a breach of International Humanitarian Law, we restate our deep concern regarding the lack of substantive mine action. This not only constitutes a significant restriction on the monitoring ability of the SMM, but continues to pose a grave and indiscriminate threat to civilians. We expect all sides to implement their commitments to mark, fence and clear areas contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance, and we once again underline the need for the JCCC to fulfil its coordination role as laid out in the TCG decision on mine clearance.
6. Madame Chairperson, on 27 July and 13 August, the 65<sup>th</sup> and 66<sup>th</sup> Russian Convoys entered Ukrainian territory at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point, as reported by the OSCE Observer Mission. We deeply regret that, once again, this happened without a full inspection by the Ukrainian border guards and in violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. This does little to allay concerns

about the possible military nature of the transported cargo.

7. 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.
  
8. 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, 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.*