



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1144 Vienna, 4 May 2017

EU Statement in Response to the Report by the Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border

The European Union warmly welcomes the Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian checkpoints at Gukovo and Donetsk, Mr Flavien Schaller, back to the Permanent Council. We thank him for his report and presentation.

As ever, and despite its limited mandate and small size, the Mission continues to provide evidence of Russian support for the separatists. This includes regular reports of a high number of people, 2,546 during the reporting period, crossing the border wearing military style clothes and camouflage, some with separatist insignia.

We reiterate our deep regret that Russian so-called “humanitarian convoys” continue to cross the border without proper control or inspection by Ukrainian authorities. To date, the Observer Mission has observed 62 Russian convoys since August 2014. These convoys continue without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities and in clear violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and without fundamental international humanitarian principles being observed.

The high level of violence in eastern Ukraine this year has again underlined the importance of comprehensive border monitoring in light of information about the continued presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia in separatist-held areas. Effective and comprehensive monitoring of the Russian-Ukrainian state border is an integral part of a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments, which re-establishes full Ukrainian control over its sovereign territory, including its borders. We recall that the Minsk Protocol calls for permanent monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian border and

verification by the OSCE with the creation of security zones in the border regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Moreover, the Minsk Package of Measures includes a commitment to reinstate full Ukrainian control over its entire border.

We again call for full, safe and unhindered SMM access to the parts of Ukraine's border currently not under its control and the removal of all obstacles preventing the setup of further Forward Patrol Bases proposed by the SMM, including in Ambrosiivka and Antratsit. We also support OSCE facilitation of commonly agreed preparatory measures with regard to the reinstatement of full control of the State border by Ukrainian government in accordance with the Minsk agreements and based on the OSCE Border Security and Management Concept.

The Observer Mission's very limited mandate and its small size in no way provides for a comprehensive border monitoring, as set out in Minsk. We deplore that the freedom of movement of the Observer Mission is still restricted, and that the Russian Federation continues to resist expansion of the Observer Mission despite the calls from the overwhelming majority of participating States for a significant expansion to all border crossings currently not under control of the Ukrainian government as well as monitoring between these border crossings. We call on Russia to engage constructively in the ongoing discussions in Vienna.

In the meantime, we urge Russia to remove the significant restrictions it has imposed on the border observers within the two border crossing points. We call on authorities to accommodate the Chief Monitors request and to agree to other measures, such as the use of binoculars, to improve the effectiveness of the Mission.

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.