



**EUROPEAN UNION**

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**EU Statement in Response to Briefings by the Chief Monitor of the OSCE SMM, Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan, and Special Representative in Ukraine of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Ambassador Martin Sajdik**

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We warmly welcome Ambassador Apakan and Ambassador Sajdik back to the Permanent Council and thank them for their briefings. We also appreciate the report by the Chief Monitor on the activities of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine from 29 October 2015 to 21 January 2016. As ceasefire violations are regrettably again rising, your work – both on the ground and at the negotiation table – is as important as ever. We reiterate our steadfast support for your efforts, Ambassador Sajdik, to advance a sustainable political settlement in line with OSCE principles and commitments, and for the important role of the SMM and you personally, Chief Monitor Apakan, are playing in this regard.

Since your last appearance before this Council the establishment of new Forward Patrol Bases and the continued increase in monitors has again demonstrated the SMM's ability to adapt to the conditions on the ground. In the course of this development, we emphasise the SMM's continued efforts to ensure a gender sensitive approach. We reiterate our full support for the SMM's impartial reporting, including further reporting on relevant thematic issues. We stress our strong wish to ensure a timely adoption of the SMM's budget and a prolongation of its current mandate.

Regretfully, and despite the stated support for the SMM by all parties, the Mission's freedom of movement is still being obstructed on a daily basis, particularly in separatist-held areas, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border. It is also unacceptable that the mission continues to have no access to Crimea. The new year has also seen a concerning rise in intimidation of SMM monitors by separatists. We

condemn any such intimidation, as mentioned by the Chief Monitor in his report and we welcome the recent security measures taken by the Mission. We would appreciate if Ambassador Apakan could shed further light on the Mission's effort to ensure the safety of SMM monitors as the Mission expands and steps taken to address the increasing intimidation of monitors and restrictions on their access. Full, safe and unhindered access is vital for the SMM to fulfil its mandate throughout Ukraine and perform its role as foreseen in the Minsk Package of Measures.

Monitoring of the areas adjacent to those parts of the international border currently not under control of the Ukrainian authorities needs to be enhanced by more frequent patrolling. We welcome the use of additional technologies to increase monitoring capacity and we encourage regular assessment of tools used for remote observation, including during night time, to strive for maximum efficiency.

We note with concern the SMM's assessment that there are significantly lower numbers of weapons declared to the SMM by the separatists compared to by the Ukrainian forces. Their usage and presence outside holding areas, suggest that a considerable number of weapons, particularly in separatist-held areas, remain undeclared and unverified. We yet again urge all sides to unconditionally and verifiably withdraw all heavy weapons in line with the Minsk Package of Measures and the Addendum. Outstanding baseline information should be provided immediately.

We highly appreciate the SMM's work with respect to dialogue facilitation and confidence-building and we value the SMM's work to enhance women's participation as mediators.

Mr. Chair, we once again express our strong support for the work of the Trilateral Contact Group and subordinate working groups. We yet again urge the sides in the Political Working Group to agree on the modalities of local elections in certain parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. It is important that established conditions for ODIHR monitoring, including ensuring security and access, are met. We also urge the sides to make progress in the Humanitarian Working Group and Security Working

Group on much needed measures to enable necessary humanitarian relief and mine action. The humanitarian situation in separatist-held areas in particular requires immediate action. In contrast, we welcome the agreement in the Economic Working Group on the restoration of key infrastructure, improving the daily lives of civilians beset by conflict.

The European Union remains firm in its call on all parties to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and also yet again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet their commitments. We recall that the duration of the EU economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements. Foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries must be removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential. We reiterate our concern about reports regarding the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia.

Mr Chair, the European Union recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to recognise these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times, to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilise the situation and to reverse moves that contravene these principles. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and 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 and LIECHTENSTEIN, 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, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.