

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°857
Vienna, 21 June 2017**

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

The security situation in Eastern Ukraine remains unpredictable and the European Union and its Member States deplore the renewed increase of 75 percent in ceasefire violations, particularly those taking place in densely populated areas, as reported in the latest SMM weekly update. We regret that despite significant restrictions on monitoring, the SMM observed in the period of 28 May – 11 June a sharp increase in the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons, weapons in violation of the respective withdrawal lines, and newly excavated trenches. We also remain highly concerned following the latest security briefing by Mr. Alexander Hug, Principal Deputy Chief Monitor. His report detailing an increased level and a widened scope of armed violence as well as a high number of serious incidents taking place mainly in non-government controlled areas, was alarming. We therefore continue to urge all sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect for the ceasefire, complete disengagement and the withdrawal of Minsk-proscribed weapons.

Mr. Chairman, we deeply regret the lack of significant progress on mine action, despite the request by Chief Monitor Apakan of 5 May for maps of areas contaminated with mines and other explosive devices. The lack of substantive progress on mine clearance does not only pose a grave and an indiscriminate threat to civilians, but continues to restrict the Mission's access to certain areas. In this context, we regret repeated observations of recently placed mines and call on all sides to live up to their responsibility 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.

We condemn the continued intimidation of SMM patrols and restrictions of access in separatist-held areas that delay and impede the Mission's ability to fulfil its mandate.

In the previous reporting periods, SMM patrols were denied access or intimidated on an increasing number of occasions, such as on 7 June near Oleksandrivske, where nearly 30 armed men prevented the SMM from proceeding. Moreover, between 7 - 11 June, on three separate occasions the SMM experienced small arms fire and bursts from cannons, assessed as targeting SMM UAVs. In this regard, we emphasise the JCCC's task to ensure a rapid response to such incidents and to facilitate access and we are concerned that it continues not to properly fulfil these roles. The lack of response to such impediments and significant delays in interventions hinder the Mission's ability to comprehensively monitor and verify. We reiterate once again that the SMM and its technical equipment must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine and we urge Russia to exercise its influence over the separatists it backs to ensure the SMM's safe access and to prevent such impediments.

Mr. Chairman, on 15 June 2017, the 64th Russian Convoy 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 possibly military nature of the transported cargo.

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, 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 country NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as 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.