



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on the Unusual Military Activities of the Russian Federation and the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States remain deeply concerned about the ongoing rapid deterioration in the security and humanitarian situation in parts of eastern Ukraine, including the rising number of civilian and military casualties. We deplore yesterday's shelling of heavy populated area in Kramatorsk which claimed the lives of innocent civilians and extend our deepest condolences to the families of all victims and wish speedy recovery to those injured.

We are greatly worried by SMM's reports of attacks on residential areas with indications of use of cluster munitions. Protection of civilians' lives by all is of utmost importance in this crisis, as well as elsewhere. The European Union calls upon all actors to refrain from using cluster munitions and to observe the principles of international humanitarian law.

The spiral of ever increasing violence in eastern Ukraine needs to stop. The fighting provoked by the continued separatist offensive, notably around Debaltseve and other strategically important areas, as reported by the SMM, is causing great human suffering and undermines all efforts aimed at a political solution. The shelling of civilians, wherever it happens, is a grave violation of international humanitarian law. Artillery should immediately be withdrawn from residential areas. Furthermore all actors should refrain from deploying weapon systems in residential areas as well as any deliberate targeting of such areas.

We welcome the local temporary truce agreed by all parties that allowed several hundreds of civilians to leave the heavily shelled city of Debaltseve on 6 February.

Swift and full implementation of the Minsk agreements as the basis for a sustainable political solution to the conflict, respecting Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, is of critical importance. Progress must be made on the withdrawal

of illegal and foreign armed groups, military equipment, fighters and mercenaries, freeing of all hostages and securing the Ukrainian-Russian border with permanent monitoring by the OSCE.

This is why the European Union will continue to actively support all diplomatic efforts conducive to creating a new political impetus, notably those currently ongoing under OSCE auspices and within the Normandy format, and will engage further as necessary. We call upon all sides to fully assume their responsibility and to implement their commitments under the Minsk agreements.

In this context, the European Union keeps noting evidence of continued and growing support given to the separatists by Russia, which underlines Russia's responsibility. We expect Russia to exert its influence and to induce the separatists to stop their hostile actions and live up fully to their commitments under the Minsk agreements, including notably the cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the security zone along the line of contact as foreseen in the Minsk Memorandum, as urgent first steps.

We note with deep concern that against the backdrop of sharply increasing violence the SMM's freedom of movement has been restricted more than usual by the separatists, particularly along the Ukraine-Russian Federation border and in areas adjacent to the contact line. Therefore, we highly value the detailed and objective SMM reporting, which despite the restrictions, testifies to significant military concentrations and movements within and from separatist-controlled areas towards the west. We call on all parties to ensure free and safe access for the SMM's monitors and unmanned aerial vehicles to all parts of Ukraine, including all parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and areas along the state border with Russia.

Such highly disturbing facts underline once again the urgency of making full use of all multilateral instruments at hand, including these under the OSCE politico-military dimension of security, to ensure military transparency and stability, especially in the highly volatile areas along the state border between the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

We note in this respect the Ukrainian request for an explanation of Russian unusual military activities in eastern Ukraine, including on the transfer of Russian military

equipment, servicemen and mercenaries, into Ukraine, circulated on 6 February under reference number CBM/UA/15/0006/F10/O.

We consider the Russian Federation's reply under reference number CBM/RU/15/0012/F41/O to this, as well as to previous Ukrainian requests for explanation under the Vienna Document Chapter III, as being unsatisfactory and not conducive to helping to restore security, trust and confidence in the OSCE region through the full use, both in letter and spirit, of all relevant OSCE politico-military instruments.

We furthermore reiterate our deep regret that the Russian Federation continues to dispatch so called "humanitarian convoys" in violation of Ukraine's national legislation, recognised international practices, as well as previously agreed modalities with the ICRC. We reiterate our position that this act constitutes a clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We urge all parties to fully respect international law, to protect civilians and humanitarian workers and to ensure unhindered access for humanitarian organisations in line with international humanitarian law and principles.

The European Union reiterates its commitment to fully implement its policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation. We stand firm in upholding Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and call upon the Russian Federation to do likewise.

The candidate countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO, ICELAND** and ALBANIA, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries LIECHTENSTEIN 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.

** Iceland continues to be a member of EFTA and the European Economic Area.