



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°869 Vienna, 22 November 2017

EU Statement on the Security situation in and around Ukraine

1. The European Union and its Member States express once more their deep concern regarding the volatile security situation in eastern Ukraine. Continued high levels of ceasefire violations and civilian casualties are of grave concern. While welcoming the re-commitment to the ceasefire at the TCG on 15 November, we regret that violations have continued and therefore believe it is high-time that all sides translate their statements into concrete and enduring actions on the ground. We call on all sides to disengage their forces and withdraw heavy weapons to verifiable storage areas. Given the recent deaths of two civilians who triggered mines it is imperative that all sides implement their commitments to mark, fence and clear mines and unexploded ordnance.
2. We condemn the continued intimidation of and interference with SMM patrols; active restrictions were recorded 19 times in the latest SMM weekly report, 80% of which were committed by Russia-backed separatists. Without proper and unrestricted monitoring by the SMM, there cannot be a verified improvement of the security situation. In order to fulfil its mandate effectively and safely the SMM is employing technology, for example acoustic sensors, to complement its patrolling activity. Madame Chairperson it is counter to existing agreements for the positioning, operation and maintenance of equipment to be impeded. Therefore we reiterate that the SMM and its technical equipment must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine. In that regard we take note of the continued denial of access to Siedove since April 2017, by so-called members of the "DPR", on the basis of orders from their superiors, which is contrary to commitments made, *inter alia*, at the TCG on 15 November 2017.
3. We note that on the 13 November an SMM UAV recorded imagery of 35 tanks and

nine mortars near Shymshynivka and 44 infantry fighting vehicles, at least 60 military type trucks and 100 people in military style clothing. On the next day, near non-government controlled Myrne, an SMM UAV recorded 30 tanks. This is a concerning concentration of military equipment and we must ask the question – what else is present in areas where Russia-backed separatists routinely deny the SMM access or interfere with SMM equipment? It once again reinforces the importance of a withdrawal of weapons to verifiable storage areas and the complete submission of information on heavy weapons to the SMM.

4. Madame Chairperson, the Observer Mission at the Russian checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk published its six-monthly report on 9 November 2017. In it we are reminded of the restrictions and prohibitions placed upon its ability to efficiently monitor the situation, for example the use of binoculars and cameras. There seems no reason why these impediments are in place and we therefore call upon the Russian authorities to allow the Mission to provide greater information and transparency on the cross-border movements.
5. The presence of mines and unexploded ordnance continue to be a significant restriction on the monitoring ability of the SMM and pose a deadly and indiscriminate threat to civilians. Some limited marking and de-mining activity has again been reported recently, however we urge all sides to do more to implement their commitments to correctly mark, fence and clear areas contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance. Greater efforts in this regard will, among other things, go towards removing the standing limitations on the SMM's freedom of movement.
6. 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.

7. 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, LIECHTENSTEIN and 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, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.