



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°849 Vienna, 29 March 2017

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States remain deeply concerned by the highly volatile security situation along the line of contact. Despite the decrease in cease-fire violations over the past two weeks, as recorded by the SMM, an escalation in the use of large-calibre weapons, proscribed by the Minsk agreements, is enormously worrying. The use of weapons that should have been withdrawn, including tanks, mortars and artillery, and multiple-launch rocket systems (MLRS) increased according to the SMM by 75 per cent and marked another sad record of the highest number of explosions attributed to fire from such weapons recorded in the last twelve months. This highly disturbing trend is accompanied by ongoing restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement and intimidation of monitors, including aggressive behaviour by armed men in areas not under the control of the Ukrainian government.

We therefore again call on all sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect of the ceasefire, the withdrawal of all Minsk-proscribed weapons and complete disengagement. These are important steps toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these fundamental principles must be restored.

We condemn any restrictions to the SMM's work and deplore incidents that risk the safety and security of SMM monitors, noting that these mostly take place in areas not controlled by the Ukrainian government, such as the recent incident on 24 March in Znamianka. Any behaviour that endangers the SMM is unacceptable and must stop immediately. We also deplore attacks on SMM assets, such as the most recent shots at the SMM UAV near Orikhove-Donetske. We urge the JCCC to take adequate steps to hold to account the individuals involved in such violent incidents. We reiterate that the SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout

Ukraine, in particular to the disengagement areas and also along the Ukrainian-Russian state border.

Mr. Chairman, on 16 and 23 March 2017, the 60th and 61st Russian Convoys 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 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.