



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°867 Vienna, 08 November 2017

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#### EU Statement on the Security situation in and around Ukraine

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1. The European Union and its Member States express once more their deep concern regarding the volatile security situation in eastern Ukraine. The marked increase in ceasefire violations is especially worrying and requires urgent action by all sides to reverse this dangerous trend. We repeat our calls for restraint and the upholding of international humanitarian law, especially where civilians, their property and essential infrastructure are affected; in this regard we strongly condemn the shelling of the Donetsk Filtration Station on 4 November 2017. A direct hit would pose a great danger to the local population, including the staff of the facility, and seriously disrupt the supply of water to almost 350,000 people on both the sides of the line of contact. We fully support Ambassador Sajdik's calls for the sides to establish safe zones. Disengagement from the line of contact, withdrawal of Minsk-proscribed heavy weapons to verified storage areas and full respect for the ceasefire are urgently needed.
2. We strongly condemn the recent intimidation of and interference with SMM patrols. Members of the so-called "DPR" refused to allow access to the SMM camera at Shyrokyne and their passage through checkpoints near Metalist. Another area where the SMM have repeatedly been denied access in the past is the city of Novoazovsk, near the Ukraine-Russia state border. Recently however, the SMM has been able to gain access and, on 31<sup>st</sup> October, saw an armed man in "dark green digital camouflage clothing, with a shoulder patch bearing the image of a black bat on a blue background surrounded by a yellow ring", similar to the description of the insignia of the Russian special forces: this warrants an explanation from the Russian Delegation. It also underscores the vital importance of SMM access to and monitoring along the uncontrolled section of the Ukraine-Russia state border, as well as nearby settlements, in order to provide the international community with a complete picture of the situation

on the ground.

3. Following the incident on 25 October 2017 in which separatists pointed a loaded heavy machine gun at an SMM vehicle, the SMM asked the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination (JCCC) to follow-up. In response, a member of the so-called “DPR” denied the facts established by the SMM, claiming that measures had been taken to prevent such incidents in future. The JCCC’s response falls short of its responsibility to address impediments to SMM safety and security. Given the ongoing and pervasive nature of impediments, almost exclusively in areas outside of government control, it is imperative that the JCCC effectively and rapidly responds when called upon by the SMM, and that concrete measures are put in place to prevent reoccurrence. We reiterate our calls for the SMM and its technical equipment to have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, in line with existing agreements, and call upon Russia to do more to ensure that the separatists cease their systematic restriction of the SMM's freedom of movement.
4. We note with concern the marked deterioration of the crossing point at Stanytsia-Luhanska and the increasingly perilous conditions for those using the bridge. If vital repairs are not made soon the bridge is at serious risk of collapse, impacting on the 8,000 people who cross every day, as well as SMM monitors who require full access to both sides of the bridge. The situation is made all the worse by the continuing ceasefire violations in and around the Stanytsia Luhanska disengagement zone. We urgently call on all sides to reach an agreement, provide the necessary security guarantees and allow these critical repairs.
5. Madame Chairperson, despite agreements brokered at the TCG, the presence of mines and unexploded ordnance continue to be a significant restriction on the monitoring ability of the SMM and pose a grave and indiscriminate threat. We urge all sides to implement their commitments to correctly mark, fence and clear areas contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance.
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.