



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°873 Vienna, 17 January 2018

EU Statement on the Security situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States remain deeply concerned by the volatile security situation in eastern Ukraine marked by the deterioration of the security situation in mid-December. Despite the decrease in the number of ceasefire violations following the recommitment to a "comprehensive, sustainable and unlimited ceasefire" by the sides as of 23 December 2017 in the Trilateral Contact Group, the SMM continues to record explosions on a daily basis, attributable to weapons that should have been withdrawn according to the Minsk agreements. We therefore echo the appeal to the sides by the Special Representative of the OSCE CiO, Ambassador Martin Sajdik of 9 January to strictly observe the ceasefire by ensuring zero tolerance for violations and their perpetrators.

Russia's withdrawal of its contingent from the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination also has serious negative implications for the stabilisation of the line of contact. The JCCC is an important mechanism which is tasked to facilitate key actions in reducing tensions, as well as an important factor in ensuring the safety and security of the SMM monitors. We call on the Russian Federation to return to the JCCC as soon as possible and urge Russia and Ukraine to re-establish the functionality of the JCCC and to strengthen cooperation within its framework.

We condemn the continued intimidation of and interference with SMM patrols, the vast majority of which continue to occur in areas outside of government control. Over the last three weeks the SMM was stopped several times at checkpoints, denied access to permanent storage sites and prevented from proceeding in areas outside of government control. Such impediments, as well as hostile behaviour towards the SMM as in case of separatist-controlled Makiivka on 3 January, are unacceptable and must stop immediately. We reiterate that the SMM and its technical equipment must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine.

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. We urge all sides to do more to implement their commitments to correctly mark, fence and clear areas contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance.

Mr. Chairman, on 21 December 2017, the 70th 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 possible 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 within its internationally recognized borders, and call upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to recognize 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 the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol to 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 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.