



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°846 Vienna, 22 February 2017

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

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The European Union and its Member States remain very concerned by the fragile situation along the line of contact, as despite the recent decline in fighting, the conditions for yet another escalation remain in place. We are still witnessing violations of the ceasefire and a similarly high number of weapons in the conflict zone – in violation of the respective withdrawal lines. Stalemate in the disengagement process, as well as significant restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement further exacerbate the lack of transparency and distrust and add to our concerns.

We welcome the meeting of the Foreign ministers of the Normandy Format on 18 February which endorsed the agreement reached in the TCG on 15 February under which the sides agreed for a ceasefire by 20 February and for the removal of heavy weapons from the security zone and giving the SMM the opportunity to monitor them. We call on all parties to implement this agreement. In particular, Russia must use its influence over the separatist forces to implement this agreement.

We once again urge the sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect of the ceasefire, the withdrawal of Minsk-proscribed weapons, complete disengagement, as well as full, safe and unhindered SMM access – including along the Ukrainian-Russian state border. We also call on the sides to cooperate fully with the SMM to this end and to utilize the full potential of the JCCC to ensure progress on the ground. These are necessary steps in order to ensure a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

We are deeply concerned by the ongoing restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement, which remain a major impediment to its mandate implementation. In the period of 6 - 12 February the SMM faced – beyond disengagement areas – restrictions to its freedom of movement on 27 occasions, out of which 24 occurred in

non-government-controlled areas. The separatists continued to hinder the Mission's efforts to monitor and verify withdrawn weapons by denying the SMM's access to heavy weapons storage sites. As reported by the SMM, in some cases there was a clear intention to conceal the presence of weapons in violation of respective withdrawal lines, such as on 10 February in Kozatske and Vyshnevyi Dil, and on 12 February in Pikuzy and in Donetsk city. Furthermore, we note that armed men restricted the SMM's freedom of movement at checkpoints along the contact line on ten occasions and denied the SMM passage through a checkpoint in separatist-controlled Staromykhailivka. As well as impediments to its freedom of movement, the SMM also continues to face unacceptable levels of intimidation in separatist-held areas, such as in the case of the incident on 17<sup>th</sup> February near Vuhlehirsk.

Moreover, the SMM's access to the Ukrainian-Russian state border currently not under the control of the Ukrainian government remains conditional, and checkpoints set up in separatist-controlled areas further constrain the SMM's ability to effectively monitor developments on the ground. We once again underline that the SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine and be provided with the necessary baseline information by the sides to verify the withdrawal of Minsk-proscribed weapons. We note that none of the sides have delivered the requested data to the SMM yet as agreed in Minsk last week. We urge concrete action by the parties.

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 deeply regret the Russian Federation's decision to recognise civil documents issued in certain parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions which are not under Ukrainian government control. This decision is not in the spirit of the Minsk agreements and undermines Ukrainian sovereignty. 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, 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 and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.