



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°859 Vienna, 19 July 2017

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

The EU and its Member States would like to take this opportunity at the last FSC meeting of this trimester to reiterate our continuing deep concern regarding the unpredictable security situation in eastern Ukraine over the past three months. The situation remains highly volatile and is still characterised by ebbs and flows in ceasefire violations at the four main hotspots and along the contact line, despite a slight decrease in ceasefire violations and the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons in comparison with the previous week. We therefore call once more on all sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect of the ceasefire, the withdrawal of all Minsk-proscribed weapons and complete disengagement.

We recall our deep shock regarding the tragic incident on 23rd April near Pryshyb, where one member of the SMM patrol was killed and another two were injured, and reiterate our strong support to all steps necessary for a thorough and impartial investigation. With every passing day, the evidence further degrades. We look forward to the results of the external forensic investigation as soon as possible. This incident revealed the increasingly dangerous environment in which the SMM is operating and we are extremely concerned to note that the situation for the SMM on the ground has not improved over the last months. We remain strong supporters of the continued work of the SMM and its mandate, which demands for safe and secure access throughout Ukraine. This access must be guaranteed on the ground and provided without reservations, hindrance, or delay.

Mr Chairman, the SMM continues to face regular and deliberate intimidation, denial of access, delays and offensive remarks. In this regard, we deplore the recent incident in Holmivskyyi, where the SMM experienced small arms fire assessed as targeting an SMM mini UAV. We note that such restrictions and incidents occur

predominantly in separatist-held areas. We regret that the SMM continue to be denied access to certain areas, notably in Novoazovsk, where the SMM has been repeatedly prevented from crossing a checkpoint, and Siedove, where armed men stopped the SMM on two occasions. We reiterate once again that the SMM and its equipment must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including to the Ukraine-Russia state border, and we urge Russia to exercise its influence over the separatists it backs to ensure the SMM's safe access and to put an end to such restrictions. Any obstructions to the SMM's work represent a violation of the Minsk agreements and seriously limit the SMM's monitoring ability.

Once again we are appalled that civilians remain the ultimate victims of the situation on the ground. In this context, we condemn the cumulative incidence of recorded injuries due to UXO and mines and the continuing observations of newly laid mines as reported in the latest SMM weekly report. We recall the Memorandum of 19 September 2014 prohibiting the laying of mines and other explosive devices, and stipulating that all previously laid mines must be removed. Moreover, the sides committed themselves in the TCG Decision on Mine Action to mark, fence and map all contaminated areas. We expect all sides to live up to their responsibility and implement these important commitments, not only for the safety of the civilian population but also to enable the SMM unimpeded access to fulfil its mandate and to properly monitor the situation on the ground.

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, 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.