

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation Nr 782
Vienna, 11 March 2015****EU Statement on the Unusual Military Activities of the Russian Federation and the Security Situation in and around Ukraine**

The European Union and its Member States reiterate our strong support to the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk agreements adopted on 12 February 2015 in Minsk. We stress that only the full and comprehensive implementation of the Minsk agreements offers a way forward to a sustainable political solution of the crisis which needs to be based on the respect for Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

We note reports by the SMM that the ceasefire is largely holding with the exception of some areas in the Donetsk region, notably in and around Donetsk airport, east of Mariupol and north of Debaltseve. In this context, we are deeply concerned by the SMM assessment that fighting near Mariupol could be part of the Russia-backed separatists' attempts to take control over this strategically important port city. We recall that any such attempts will be a clear breach of the Minsk agreements and seriously undermine all efforts promoting a sustainable political solution.

Reports from the SMM of continued obstructions to its freedom of movement, including of several instances in which the SMM was prevented from monitoring and verifying the withdrawal of heavy weapons and of serious threats to SMM observers give rise to grave concern and are unacceptable.

We remind once again that the strict, comprehensive and sustainable compliance with the ceasefire regime and the verifiable withdrawal of heavy weapons are essential for the successful implementation of the Package of Measures agreed in Minsk. The SMM was entrusted under the Minsk agreements to play a crucial role in this respect. We therefore strongly urge all sides to fully cooperate with the SMM to fulfil their tasks and mandate, including by providing the requested baseline information that would allow the SMM to monitor and verify the withdrawal of heavy weapons, ensuring unconditional and

unrestricted access of the SMM to the areas under their control as well as providing the SMM personnel with the necessary security guarantees.

We call for the full implementation of all aspects of the Minsk agreements by all signatories, including substantial and effective OSCE monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. We reiterate that re-establishing Ukrainian control over its border remains of paramount importance.

Furthermore, we note the continued presence of heavy military equipment in areas controlled by the separatists. We call for the immediate withdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment, as well as mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine under monitoring of the OSCE as well as disarmament of all illegal groups. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard.

Only words matched with deeds will in the end bring real hopes of a political solution to this conflict. The European Union stands ready to take appropriate action in case the fighting and other negative developments in violation of the Minsk agreements continue.

We draw attention that the Package of Measures calls for humanitarian aid to be delivered through an international mechanism. In this context, we express our deep regret that yet another Russian so called humanitarian convoy entered Ukrainian territory on 4 March in violation of Ukraine's national legislation, recognised international practices, as well as previously agreed modalities with the ICRC. We recall our position that this act constitutes a clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In addition, we call for respect of international humanitarian law and principles, notably in ensuring safe passage for all those who want to leave the area and for humanitarian workers to deliver aid.

Mr Chairman,

We have closely followed the discussion, including at last week's AIAM, on the recent Vienna Document inspections to Russia. We have noted with concern the reports about flight restrictions applied by the Russian side during the inspections. Despite the explanations provided to this effect by Russia, we remain unconvinced that, under such circumstances, the genuine purpose of the inspections that is to alleviate security concerns stemming from Russian unusual military activities along the border with Ukraine has been met.

Cooperative spirit and good faith have no alternative in rebuilding trust and confidence greatly affected by crisis situations. We note as a positive example in this context developments on the demining in the village of Kominternove which supports the security and safety of civilians and the process of confidence building. In a complementary sense, we strongly appeal to all participating States to make full use, both in letter and spirit, of the OSCE politico-military toolbox.

The European Union reiterates its commitment to fully implement its policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation. We stand firm in upholding Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and call upon the Russian Federation to do likewise.

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 country NORWAY, member 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.