



EUROPEAN UNION
OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°847
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**EU Statement on the security situation in and around
Ukraine**

The European Union and its Member States remain deeply concerned by the deteriorating situation in eastern Ukraine: Ceasefire violations continue regularly along the contact line with ebbs and flows in intensity of shelling; weapons in violation of the withdrawal lines continue to be found; and the safety of the SMM's monitors continues to be undermined by aggressive acts of armed men in areas not under the control of the Ukrainian government. We condemn in the strongest terms these deplorable incidents, such as the one in Yasynuvata on 24 February, when armed men held SMM monitors at gunpoint, seized a mini-UAV and fired at the patrol. On 3 March in separatist-controlled Khreshchatytske, the SMM was exposed to warning shots and subsequently had to leave the area. On the same day in Yasynuvata an SMM mini-UAV was shot at while flying over the Donetsk Water Filtration Station in order to facilitate access for repair work. These incidents should be seen in the context of a number of antagonistic comments and unfounded allegations to the Mission by senior separatists' members creating hostility towards the SMM, as well as access restrictions in separatist-held areas. Such actions put our monitors at very serious risk, hamper efforts to resolve the conflict and prevent the SMM from gaining a full picture of developments on the ground. This must stop immediately and those responsible must be held accountable. We expect the JCCC to take swift action to this end. We deplore the actions of the separatists and call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it supports to fully comply with commitments undertaken.

Mr. Chairman, we have repeatedly heard in this forum from the esteemed representative of the Russian Federation that the crisis in and around Ukraine is supposedly a "civil war", and that Russia's sole role is in the facilitation of dialogue. This distorts the facts, and hampers constructive dialogue. It also ignores Russia's repeated actions in eastern Ukraine which undermine Ukrainian sovereignty and

territorial integrity. We regularly see evidence from SMM reports of extremely sophisticated technology, available in the Russian Federation's military arsenal but never in that of Ukraine, being found in areas held by the separatists. For example, since the beginning of its mandate, the SMM has reported sightings of the Russian jamming device, the Zhitel, at least six times – most recently on 19 January 2017. In addition to this, the SMM has also reported sightings of sophisticated and highly specialised Russian Multiple Launch Rocket Systems, such as the destructive and indiscriminate TOS-1 Buratino. The SMM has also distributed information on the presence of the Orlan-10 UAV – another highly specialised piece of Russian equipment. The Russian Federation has yet to give an adequate explanation of the presence of such unique equipment in Ukrainian territory or how such equipment, which requires specialised training, is being operated.

As well as the transfer of equipment from Russia, the OSCE's Observer Mission frequently reports on Russian ambulances crossing into Donbas (most recently on 27 February) and on vans bearing the Russian inscription "Gruz 200", well known Russian military code for "military personnel killed in action" (most recently on 28 January). In 2015, on 20 May and on 2 August, the OSCE SMM even reported conversations with men in separatist held areas who claimed to be members of the Russian armed forces. In 2016, on 4 September and on 17 October, there were SMM reports of military vehicles with Russian license plates being spotted in areas held by separatists.

In addition Russian convoys are regularly reported crossing the border without full inspection by Ukrainian border guards and in violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity, which raises concerns about the possible military nature of the transported cargo. In the last three weeks, on 21 and 28 February, the fifty-eighth and fifty-ninth Russian convoys entered Ukrainian territory at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point.

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 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.