



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1230 Vienna, 30 May 2019

EU Statement for the farewell ceremony for the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan

Mr. Chairman, the EU warmly welcomes Ambassador Apakan to the Permanent Council and commends the Slovak CiO for this opportunity to express our deep gratitude for his work at the helm of the SMM.

Ambassador Apakan, we highly appreciate your commitment, dedication and perseverance in fulfilling the challenging and important task as SMM Chief Monitor. You have been heading the Mission since its deployment five years ago to provide early warning to the international community and to contain the conflict, which is a consequence of Russia's acts of aggression against Ukraine. You have consolidated the Mission over the years – a remarkable achievement given its unprecedented size and scope, as well as the hostile environment in which the Mission and its civilian unarmed members operate. You had to go through difficult moments, when one of your monitors was killed in an anti-tank mine explosion two years ago and two others were injured. We mourn the loss and appreciate your tireless efforts to ensure the safety and security of our monitors, as well as to deal effectively with the repeated instances of willful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets of the Mission. We reiterate our position, that the operational, security and financial consequences of all obstructions must be assessed.

You have steadily pointed to the dire humanitarian situation and human suffering along the line of contact stemming from armed violence, presence of mines and heavy weapons, proscribed by the Minsk agreements, as well as the unbearable situation at the entry-exit checkpoints. In this context, we welcome your efforts as the Chair of the Security Working Group of the TCG aimed at making progress on the withdrawal of heavy weapons, on mine action and on local ceasefires to enable essential repairs and relief to the local population. We deeply regret Russia's departure from the JCCC which made it more difficult to fulfil this challenging task of small practical steps easing the life of civilians to the extent possible.

Ambassador Apakan, we have been staunch supporters of your work by providing monitors, financial resources, and political support, including through public statements condemning any restrictions and impediments to the Mission's work. The SMM is an unprecedented undertaking of this organisation. The SMM is the "eyes and ears" of the international community on the ground and thus, together with the TCG and the Normandy Format, an important element of efforts toward a sustainable political solution to the conflict in line with OSCE principle and commitments.

Ambassador Apakan, we thank you and your team for the outstanding work. We express our deep gratitude for the excellent cooperation and friendship. We say goodbye with best wishes for your personal life and professional endeavors.

We extend our warm welcome to your successor, Ambassador Cevik. We would like to use this opportunity to assure Ambassador Cevik of the EU's continued support. We are sure that the trust you enjoy, Ambassador, around this table, as well as the team of dedicated, qualified and motivated monitors on the ground will help you in fulfilling this complex and challenging task.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.