

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°824
Vienna, 6 July 2016**

**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. The situation is tense and unpredictable with serious repercussions for civilian population. We strongly condemn the use of weapons proscribed by the Minsk agreements, including mortars, artillery and multiple rocket launchers. Such escalation represents a serious violation of the Minsk agreements and hinders the SMM monitoring activities.

It is civilians who suffer most from the ongoing fighting. We deplore continued shelling of residential areas with artillery leading to civilian casualties and damage. We reiterate our call on all sides not to use residential areas for military activity, in order to avoid such casualties and damage.

Moves of positions closer to the contact line add further to our concerns, as tensions stemming from the proximity of the armed formations can erupt into fighting, putting civilians in danger. We urge all sides to take concrete steps to disengage, strictly adhere to the ceasefire and ensure an unconditional and verifiable withdrawal of all Minsk-regulated weapons. We welcome intensive work within the security working group of the TCG to this end, including tentative agreements on disengagement areas. We expect substantial progress on the ground.

We deplore continuing obstructions of the SMM's work. These occur particularly in areas not under the control of the Ukrainian government, where again a Zhitel jamming station of the type exclusively produced in Russia was observed by the SMM. We are disturbed by reckless actions, such as shelling of Vodiane by mortars during an SMM visit. This happened despite the fact that the visit had been coordinated with all sides through the JCCC and security assurances were given.

Perpetrators of such attacks must be held accountable and effective control and coordination must be ensured to safeguard the security of the SMM. There must also be a rapid response to impediments of its monitoring. The SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border.

We deeply regret that so-called "humanitarian convoys" from Russia continue to enter Ukrainian territory without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities in clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as without fundamental international humanitarian principles being observed.

We remain firm in calling on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments, notably ensuring the ceasefire, as well as those related to agreeing on the modalities of local elections in certain parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. These must be held in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. These are necessary steps in order to achieve a sustainable political settlement of the conflict, based on full respect for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. All Minsk-regulated weapons must be withdrawn. We reiterate our concern regarding information about the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia in the conflict zone. All foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries must be removed from Ukraine. 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. The ceasefire must be respected. 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.