

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°864
Vienna, 11 October 2017**

**EU Statement on the Security situation in and around
Ukraine**

1. The European Union and its Member States express once more their deep concern regarding the volatile security situation in eastern Ukraine, especially the increasing trend of explosions attributable to weapons that should have been withdrawn. While welcoming the reduction in ceasefire violations and victims of violence, we note with great regret that civilian casualties, including two deaths last week, alongside needless damage to civilian property, continue to occur. We are also troubled by the apparent trend of significant quantities of heavy weapons in violation of withdrawal lines and outside of designated storage sites, the vast majority of which have been observed outside areas controlled by the government. The grave number of ceasefire violations in Svitlodarsk on September 23 and 24 demonstrates how the existence and proximity of heavy weapons cause volatility on the ground. Accordingly we urge all sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect for the ceasefire, the withdrawal of all Minsk-proscribed weapons and recommencement of the stalled disengagement process.
2. We condemn the continued interference with SMM patrols, a recent example of which occurred in Shcherbak, where three armed men in military-style clothing and with their faces covered prevented the SMM from proceeding, claiming that the SMM had to coordinate its movement with the "DPR". SMM freedom of movement is critical to the execution of its mandate and we call upon all sides to assure it. Without proper and unrestricted monitoring by the SMM, there cannot be a verified improvement of the security situation.
3. Moreover the safety of SMM monitors remains of paramount importance. This

was clearly emphasised during the briefings by Ambassador Apakan and Mr Sajdik on 28 September 2017 and mirrored in the comments made by those Delegations that took the floor in response. Yet contrary behaviour continues on the ground and shows a blatant disregard for the wellbeing of SMM personnel and their ability to fulfil their mandate. The continued inadequate response to such incidents creates an environment of impunity that only encourages further threats and intimidation of SMM monitors. It is high time that those responsible are held accountable and brought to justice.

4. In this regard we expect the JCCC to rapidly and effectively respond, when called upon by the SMM, to address any impediments faced by the Mission; we reiterate once again that the SMM and its technical equipment must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, as agreed by all sides. We urge Russia to exercise its influence over the separatists it backs, to ensure the SMM's safe access and to prevent such impediments.
5. Mines and unexploded ordnance are a significant impediment to the monitoring ability of the SMM and continue to pose a grave and indiscriminate threat to civilians. Whereas the SMM recently observed some mine hazard signs adjacent to the Siverskyi Donets river, this limited example reminds us that a great deal more needs to be done to fulfil the agreements on mine action. Therefore we expect all sides to implement their commitments to mark, fence and clear areas contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance. Furthermore, as a concrete step, we urge all sides to respond to the repeated requests of the Chief Monitor to provide comprehensive maps of mine and unexploded ordnance hazards, the absence of which is not only a serious safety issue but also prevents access to many important areas.
6. Madame Chairperson, on 28 September 2017, the 67th Russian Convoy entered Ukrainian territory at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point, as reported by the OSCE Observer Mission. We deeply regret that, once again, this happened without a full inspection by the Ukrainian border guards and in violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. This does little to allay concerns about the possible military nature of the transported cargo.

7. 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.
8. 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 GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.