



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Special Permanent Council No 1131 Vienna, 31 January 2017

EU statement on “recent developments in eastern Ukraine”

The European Union deplores the recent escalation in violence in the area around Avdiivka, Yasynuvata and Donetsk airport, where numerous civilian and military casualties have been reported in recent days. We thank the Chairmanship-in-Office for quickly convening this Special Permanent Council Meeting to direct much needed attention to this alarming deterioration, with report of populated areas coming under fire, including with Grad multiple rocket launch systems. Thousands of civilians are in harm's way and the latest incidents have already caused major disruptions in the provision of basic utility services to the local communities. This comes at a time when temperatures drop far below zero at night and humanitarian access is limited. In short, government-controlled Avdiivka is on the brink of a humanitarian disaster. There is an urgent need to allow for the immediate repair of critical infrastructure. We commend the efforts of the Normandy format and the TCG in favour of the implementation of the Minsk agreements and express our full support to the statements issued by the Austrian Chairmanship, Ambassador Sajdik, and Ambassador Apakan in calling on all sides to do their utmost to prevent escalation and further civilian casualties. Further casualties can be prevented, if the sides genuinely decide to do so.

We urge the sides to agree on concrete and immediate steps to reverse the deteriorating security situation and ensure humanitarian access. Let me stress again: full, safe and unhindered SMM access is key to verify steps taken in this regard.

The steps required to avoid further human suffering are clear: Full respect of the ceasefire, full and verifiable withdrawal of Minsk-proscribed weapons, complete disengagement and full, safe and unhindered access for the SMM and international humanitarian actors. These steps must be taken without delay.

We remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full in order to achieve a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and yet again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet those commitments in full. Moreover, we again 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 and foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential. We reiterate our deep concern about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in separatist-held areas. The duration of the European Union's economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to recognise 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 to 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 LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, 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.