

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°855
Vienna, 31 May 2017**

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

The European Union and its Member States remain deeply concerned by the volatile and unpredictable security situation in eastern Ukraine. Against the background of patrolling restrictions, the SMM recorded fewer ceasefire violations along the contact line over the last week. However, the continued and widespread use of weapons and the proximity of heavily armed forces and formations, allied with the absence of political progress, give rise to concern as the potential for escalation remains. We therefore again urge all sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect for the ceasefire, the withdrawal of Minsk-proscribed weapons, complete disengagement and comprehensive mine action. We expect all sides to live up to their responsibility to mark, fence and clear areas contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance, and we once again underline the need for the JCCC to fulfil its coordination role as laid out in the TCG decision on mine clearance.

Measurable steps on mine action by all sides, as requested by the Chief monitor in his 5 May letter, are also necessary to restore proper and unrestricted monitoring by the SMM following the fatal incident of 23rd April. We deplore the ongoing intimidation and harassment of the SMM in separatist-controlled areas. We underline the need to ensure proper monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian state border in areas not under the control of the Ukrainian government. The SMM continues to face restrictions to its monitoring of border areas – despite repeated statements of Russia in this forum to the contrary. Due to long distances between SMM patrol bases and border areas, exacerbated by poor road conditions and delays at checkpoints, the SMM is unable to comprehensively monitor these areas. This means that observations can only provide a snapshot, as Russia-backed separatists continue to deny the SMM the necessary security guarantees to open patrol bases closer to border areas. We

repeat that the SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine and we urge Russia to exercise its influence over the separatists it backs to abide by their commitments regarding the SMM's access and to ensure accountability. We underline the role of JCCC in ensuring rapid response to impediments to SMM monitoring and remain concerned by its ineffectiveness to this end.

Mr. Chairman, on 25 May, the 63rd 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 possibly military nature of the transported cargo.

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 and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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