



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 996 Vienna, 22 April 2014

EU Statement on the Current Security Challenges in the OSCE Area and OSCE Engagement with Ukraine

The EU would like to thank the Chairmanship for convening this timely Special Permanent Council Meeting on the situation in Ukraine just a few days after the adoption of the Geneva Joint Statement. We welcome the Geneva Joint Statement on Ukraine adopted by Ukraine, the US, the Russian Federation and the EU at their meeting on April 17. This meeting should constitute the beginning of a process of dialogue. We welcome the briefing on steps taken by the Special Monitoring Mission following the Joint Statement.

The EU remains gravely concerned about the situation in Eastern and Southern parts of Ukraine. We deeply regret the violent incident on Sunday near the city of Sloviansk that left a number of individuals killed or wounded and we continue to condemn actions undertaken by armed individuals and groups in a number of cities in Eastern Ukraine. These destructive actions aimed at destabilising the situation must come to an immediate end. The EU calls on all parties to keep utmost restraint and commends the Ukrainian authorities for pursuing their law and order operations in a measured manner.

The commitments in the Geneva Joint Statement should be translated into action immediately and it should be fully implemented by all parties involved.

The first priority should be to focus on de-escalation. In this regard the Geneva Joint Statement includes a number of concrete steps that should be implemented immediately. Among others, they include that all illegal armed groups must be disarmed; all illegally seized buildings must be returned to legitimate owners; all illegally occupied streets, squares and other public places in Ukrainian cities and

towns must be vacated. We welcome the report of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission that Kyiv City Hall will be vacated in the next 2-3 days. Regrettably, it appears so far that little visible progress was achieved in the implementation of these concrete steps in Eastern Ukraine.

We note the reports of the Monitoring Mission indicating that central and regional authorities have made efforts to implement the Geneva Joint Statement, and that regional authorities are looking for further support from the Government. We commend initiatives taken by the Government of Ukraine following the Geneva Joint Statement; including by suspending the active stage of its countermeasures drafting an amnesty law and committing itself to an inclusive, transparent and accountable constitutional process. The EU stands ready to support the Ukrainian government in building trust across the country. We underline the importance of launching an urgent and broad national dialogue on constitutional reform.

We welcome that the Special Monitoring Mission was given the leading role in assisting Ukrainian authorities and local communities in the immediate implementation of these de-escalation measures. We believe that the Special Monitoring Mission is the right entity for this very demanding and difficult task and has the mandate it needs to do so. The EU and its Member States continue to support an expansion of the Mission to draw on its full potential and appreciate the need to provide monitors with the necessary qualifications and extra budgetary funding.

We commend the Special Monitoring Mission for its work and its reports to date which are of utmost importance in monitoring developments on the ground. We encourage the Mission to continue reporting in a timely, explicit and transparent manner. We commend the Mission for its extensive public reporting. We note with concern the incidents that have occurred regarding security and access for its staff and we once again call for all OSCE representatives to have safe and free access throughout Ukraine to fulfil their mandate.

As tasked by the Geneva Joint Statement, the Mission is now strengthening its work on dialogue facilitation and other related tasks within its mandate. We encourage the parties concerned to draw on the Mission's expertise and resources.

The presidential elections in Ukraine on 25 May will provide an important platform for debate and an opportunity for citizens from all regions and political constituencies to express their political views about Ukraine's future peacefully and democratically.

We welcome the first interim report by the Election Observation Mission in Ukraine dated 17 April. We note the commitments by the Ukrainian authorities to ensure that the electoral process meets international standards for democratic elections and we welcome the relevant measures taken in regard to election legislation and organization as described in the report. We condemn all actions aimed at the prevention of the free expression of democratic will by the Ukrainian people during these elections. We are also concerned about the unclear situation for eligible voters from Crimea.

The Representative on Freedom of the Media has highlighted pressure on media outlets and harassment of journalists on a number of occasions. We note her statements after her recent visit to Ukraine expressing concern that the media freedom situation in Ukraine has reached dangerous levels with reference to developments in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea. We call on the authorities and on those responsible for the situation on the ground to do their utmost to protect all journalists.

The European Union recalls the report of the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights published on 15 April and looks forward to publication of the ODIHR/HCNM Human Rights Assessment Mission report.

The European Union reiterates its strong support for Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, and calls upon Russia to do so as well. We demand Russia call back its troops from the Ukrainian border and cease any actions aimed at destabilising Ukraine. Any threat or use of force against Ukraine or any other countries is not acceptable. We

urge Russia to engage constructively in a meaningful discussion within the Vienna Document on legitimate security concerns stemming from Russian military activities in areas bordering Ukraine. In this context, we once more regret that the Russian Federation did not take advantage of the FSC-PC meetings on 7 and 17 April to engage in a constructive discussion on legitimate security concerns stemming from Russian military activities around Ukraine. We call upon Russia to revoke the authorisation given by the Federation Council to use armed forces in Ukraine. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and will not recognise it.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ICELAND+, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidates ALBANIA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, the EFTA countries LIECHTENSTEIN 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 and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.