



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N°1098
Vienna, 28 April 2016**

EU Statement in Response to Briefings by the Chief Monitor of the OSCE SMM, Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan, and Special Representative in Ukraine of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Ambassador Martin Sajdik

We warmly welcome Ambassador Apakan and Ambassador Sajdik back to the Permanent Council and thank them for their presentations. We also appreciate the report by the Chief Monitor on the latest activities of the Special Monitoring Mission. We take this opportunity to reiterate our strong support for your efforts, Ambassador Sajdik, to advance a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments, and for the important role that the SMM and you personally, Chief Monitor Apakan, are playing in this regard. We reaffirm our full support for the SMM's impartial reporting and the monitors deployed in the field under often difficult circumstances.

Against the back-drop of the severe security deterioration along the line of contact, your work remains as important and pressing as ever. The high level of violence continued unabated last week, with the increased use of heavy weapons, the close proximity between military formations on both sides, and the rising risk to civilians and SMM monitors being of particular concern. We join the Chairman-in-Office in his condemnation of recent threats against monitors. We call for immediate steps to disengage, deescalate and consolidate the ceasefire. Ambassador Apakan, you note in your report that tanks and heavy weapons are consistently deployed on the line of contact. We must therefore repeat our call on all sides to unconditionally and verifiably withdraw all Minsk-regulated weapons.

Regrettably, and as reported by the Chief Monitor, significant obstruction and serious intimidation of SMM monitors and UAVs continues, particularly in areas held by Russia-backed separatists. This is unacceptable and must cease at once. We strongly support the Chief Monitor's tireless effort to overcome these obstacles and appreciate recent further steps taken by the SMM to improve the security of the monitors. Full, safe and unhindered access is indispensable for the SMM to fulfil its mandate and its role as foreseen in the Minsk agreements. We welcome steps to explore additional technologies to increase monitoring capacity.

We once again call for SMM monitoring and freedom of movement in the areas along the internationally recognised border currently not under the control of the Ukrainian authorities. The SMM's current level of access to these areas remains limited, irregular and conditional. This is unacceptable. The SMM should be allowed without further delay to open all planned Forward Patrol Bases and Hubs. It is also unacceptable that the mission continues to have no access to Crimea.

Mr Chair, we affirm our strong support for the work of the Trilateral Contact Group, its working groups and their coordinators. We urge the sides to agree on the disengagement proposal put forth by the Chief Monitor in the Security Working Group. We reiterate our call on the sides in the Political Working Group to agree without further delay on the modalities of local elections in certain parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. Established conditions for ODIHR monitoring, including ensuring security and access, must be met. We call on the sides in the Economic Working Group to agree on further steps to restore basic infrastructure. Finally, we urge the sides in the Humanitarian Working Group to agree on the release and exchange of all remaining prisoners and illegally detained persons and on removing the severe restrictions imposed on the delivery of humanitarian relief to separatist-held areas. We appreciate the visit by Ambassador Frisch to Vienna this week and his insights on the situation on the ground. We would welcome visits by other coordinators.

We appreciate the SMM's continued engagement to enhance gender mainstreaming in all aspects of its external and internal work.

The European Union remains firm in its call on all parties to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists to meet their commitments in full. We once again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists. We recall that the duration of the EU economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements. The ceasefire must be respected. All heavy 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 concern about reports regarding the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia.

Tuesday's decision by the so-called Supreme Court of Crimea to prohibit the activities of the Mejlis, a self-governing body of the Crimean Tatars, labelling it "an extremist organisation", represents a grave attack on the rights of the Crimean Tatars as a whole. It constitutes a further very negative escalation in the human rights situation on the Crimean Peninsula since its illegal annexation by the Russian Federation in 2014, including as regards the persecution of persons belonging to national minorities. Full compliance with international human rights standards and other obligations under international law, notably in this case concerning the Crimean Tatar community, must be ensured without delay. This serious development once again underlines the need for international human rights actors to have full and unconditional access to the Crimean Peninsula.

Mr Chair, the European Union recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to recognise these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times, to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilise the situation and to 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, 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.