



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1048 Vienna, 23 April 2015

EU Statement in Response to the Report by the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan

The European Union warmly welcomes the Chief Monitor, Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan, back to the Permanent Council. We continue to strongly support the SMM. Its impartial and objective monitoring and reporting as well as its support to efforts to de-escalate the crisis in and around Ukraine are of vital importance. We commend the SMM for responding quickly to new developments, adapting and improving its reporting regime and for enhancing its capacity in eastern parts of Ukraine.

We appreciate the efforts of the SMM to ensure a local ceasefire and de-militarisation of Shyrokyne and to extend monitoring of the situation in the area. We regret that hostilities are continuing in Shyrokyne despite these efforts. We call on all parties to support the efforts of the SMM that might be replicated in other hotspots. We remain concerned about the continuing fighting in particular in the villages around Donetsk Airport and the suffering inflicted on civilians in the conflict area. The security incidents and provocations in Odessa and Kharkiv are also of concern. We reiterate that any attempts by the Russia-backed separatists to gain control of additional territory will seriously undermine all efforts promoting a sustainable political resolution of the conflict based on the full respect for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders.

We once again call on all parties to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements. The ceasefire must be respected, heavy weapons withdrawn and foreign armed formations, military equipment as well as mercenaries must be removed from the territory of Ukraine. We underline the Russian authorities' responsibility in this regard. We expect Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists to meet their Minsk commitments in full. The provisions of the Minsk agreements concerning the

political process are also of major importance and require swift and sustained progress. In this regard, we reiterate our call for a quick launch of the working groups within the Trilateral Contact Group of the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the OSCE-chairmanship.

Mr Chairman, the SMM must be allowed to fulfil its mandate and implement its tasks under the Minsk agreements. There is an urgent need to ensure full and unhindered access for SMM monitors in all parts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. The widespread restrictions on the movement of monitors in separatist controlled areas, including in critical areas along the state border, as indicated by SMM reporting, is deeply troublesome. This constitutes a major obstacle to comprehensive monitoring by SMM patrols and makes it even more important to establish an effective technical surveillance package as part of a wider monitoring and verification framework, including through the use of UAVs and satellite imagery. We are concerned about reports of continued inflow of military equipment and personnel into Ukraine from the Russian Federation. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its border remains essential.

We note the many SMM observations of heavy military equipment on both sides that have not been withdrawn as required but re-deployed or removed from their holding areas. For instance, at three “DPR” controlled holding areas none of the previously recorded weapons were present during a check on 19 April. We once again urge the parties to provide SMM with the baseline information needed to verify the withdrawal of heavy weapons. Moreover, we reiterate the need for parties to recognise that if a durable political settlement is to be reached, it is critical that they uphold both the letter and the spirit of the Minsk agreements.

We express our deep concern about the serious security incidents involving SMM monitors, including the incident on 7 April when a “DPR” member opened fire towards a SMM patrol near Shyrokyne. It is unacceptable that SMM patrols continue to experience threats and harassment by all sides, and this must stop. SMM patrols must be allowed to pass all checkpoints without providing information about citizenship of its members or destination of its patrols, and without delay or threat of detention.

We deeply regret that so-called 'humanitarian convoys' from Russia continue to enter Ukrainian territory, without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities and in clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and without fundamental international humanitarian principles being observed.

We welcome the increased activities of the Human Dimension Unit of the SMM and we urge the SMM to closely follow the situation of the most vulnerable especially those remaining in the crisis area as well as the internally displaced. We also welcome the SMM's monitoring activities related to gender issues.

It is unacceptable that the SMM has had no access to Crimea despite the urgent need for international monitoring of the deteriorating human rights situation. We support the continuation of the SMM's reporting together with the OSCE Institutions on the situation in Crimea based on interviews with activists, IDPs and other sources.

Mr Chairman, the EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We once again urge Russia to recognise by acts these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute 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*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, 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.

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