



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1217  
Vienna, 14 February 2019**

**EU Statement in response to the Report of the Chief  
Observer of the Observer Mission at the Russian  
Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk, Ambassador Gyorgy  
Varga**

Ambassador Varga, the EU welcomes you to the Permanent Council and thanks you for your report which was received well in advance of today's Permanent Council. We thank you for that. We commend you and your team for your hard work to implement the mandate of the Observer Mission.

The European Union finds the border monitoring on the Russian-Ukrainian State border of vital importance. Effective and comprehensive monitoring of this border is an integral part of a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Such a sustainable political solution must re-establish full Ukrainian control over its sovereign territory, including the border. We recall that the Minsk Protocol calls for permanent monitoring of the border and verification by the OSCE and that the Minsk Package of Measures includes a commitment to reinstate full Ukrainian control over its entire international border as part of the foreseen sequence of security and political steps.

In your report, you underline that the freedom of movement of the observer teams within the border checkpoints continue to be restricted while the use of observation tools such as binoculars or cameras remain prohibited. These restrictions lead to blind spots, as you say, for the observer teams, which we deeply regret. We also regret that the Russian Federation continues to resist an expansion of the Mission and we reiterate our call for a significant expansion of the Mission to all border crossings on the Russia-Ukraine state border currently not under control of the Ukrainian government as well as between these border crossings. The mandate of the mission is currently very limited and its small size does not provide for comprehensive border monitoring. The limitations put on your work together with the

systematic denial of access to certain border areas by Russia-backed armed formations raises clear concerns about what is being hidden from the international community.

At the informal meeting yesterday, it was not the first time you highlighted that the current limited period of the mandate creates substantial supplementary tasks to the Mission. We acknowledge that the shortness of every mandate cycle puts administrative burdens on you and your team. We agree with you Ambassador Varga that an extension of the mandate cycle of the mission for a longer period could ensure a more stable functioning of the Mission.

We welcome the exchange of information between the Observer Mission and the SMM and we encourage the continuation of this practice and the further development of the cooperation between the two missions.

We regret that so-called “humanitarian convoys” continue to enter into Ukrainian territory without consent from the Ukrainian government. As you mention in your report, the OM observed three Russian convoys that crossed via the Donetsk border checkpoint between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2019. We are thankful for the SPOT reports you release concerning this violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. We recall that the Minsk agreements foresee that humanitarian aid will be delivered through an international mechanism.

Finally, we would be grateful if you could share plans for the upcoming activities of the Mission. Thank you.

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, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA 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.