



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1018 Vienna, 9 October 2014

EU Statement in Response to the Report by the Acting Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border

The European Union warmly welcomes the Acting Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border, Mr Paul Picard, to the Permanent Council. We thank him for his interesting and concise report and commend him and his staff for their dedication and professionalism in implementing the Mission's mandate, sometimes under difficult circumstances.

We believe the Mission has provided valuable and objective reporting on the state of affairs at the Russian Gukovo and Donetsk checkpoints. Despite the unfortunately very limited mandate and small size, the Mission has made some important observations related to the crisis in and around Ukraine. We note in particular the regular reports of a high number of young people crossing the border wearing military-style clothes and comments in conversations that they are not allowed to cross with weapons from Russia. Instead they receive weapons, ammunition and equipment on the Ukrainian side before being dispatched to assigned areas. Near the Gukovo checkpoint there is even a shooting range where they can calibrate their newly received weapons. These observations and testimonies confirm what we already know; that fighters coming from Russia are heavily involved on the ground in this crisis.

Besides the valuable reporting, we would like to highlight the Mission's crucial role in facilitating a safe passage through the Gukovo checkpoint for 437 Ukrainian servicemen in the beginning of August. The Mission's presence and facilitation efforts potentially saved many lives.

We welcome the Mission's outreach to the media through publication of its reports and press briefings. In this context, we regret that the Mission's reports have been misused by Russian media to suggest that no troops, ammunition or weapons crossed the border into Ukraine. We know that this is not true.

Mr Chairman, we would like to reiterate that effective and comprehensive monitoring of the Russian-Ukrainian border should be an integral part of a sustainable political solution, which fully upholds OSCE principles, and re-establishes Ukrainian control over its sovereign territory, including the border. We recall that the Minsk-protocol called for a permanent monitoring by the OSCE of the Russian-Ukrainian state border as well as monitoring and verification of a ceasefire. Border monitoring and ceasefire monitoring are closely interlinked and mutually dependent. Therefore, a coherent overall approach is needed.

We regret the lack of progress towards substantial OSCE monitoring of the Russian-Ukrainian border. We would like to recall that when the decision was taken to deploy this Observer Mission at two checkpoints we said that this was a limited first step. Since then large-scale attacks have forced the Ukrainian authorities to give up control of additional checkpoints. We believe that a significant expansion of the Observer Mission, combined with effective monitoring on the Ukrainian side of the border by the Special Monitoring Mission, is needed to contribute to an effective, comprehensive and bilateral control of the border, pending return of control of all border checkpoints to the Ukrainian authorities.

The Observer Mission should be expanded to a number of other checkpoints along the Russian border with Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts of Ukraine. The Observer Mission should also operate freely along the "green" border between these checkpoints to ensure comprehensive border monitoring; and should be able to conduct unannounced inspections. Furthermore, and taking into account the high workload already placed on the Mission as it stands, this expansion will demand a significant increase in the number of observers. We encourage the Chairmanship to develop options for such a meaningful expansion. We would be grateful if the acting Chief Observer could share his views in this regard. We also note with concern that the Mission has not been provided with proper protection

and immunities, and call on the Russian Federation to provide this as soon as possible.

We recall that an important confidence building element of the Berlin Declaration was to provide access for Ukrainian border guards to participate in the control of the specified Russian checkpoints. We note that a group of Ukrainian border guards have been present at the Donetsk border checkpoint since mid-August. With a ceasefire now in place, we urge Russia to allow Ukrainian border guards and customs officials to participate in border control in line with Russia's Berlin commitments.

We once again thank Mr Picard and his staff for their excellent work. We are looking forward to an expansion of this Observer Mission. We wish Mr Picard every success in his future endeavours.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+, ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, member 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.

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