



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States would like to reiterate our strong concern about the security situation in parts of eastern Ukraine, which considerably deteriorated during the past week, including the significant increase in both the number and intensity of ceasefire violations leading to numerous civilian and military casualties, as well as damage to civilian buildings and infrastructure. We deplore all such occurrences, and extend our deepest condolences to the families of the victims.

In this context, we take note of the agreement on a special investigation to be conducted by the JCCC, and monitored by the SMM regarding the incident on 13 January which resulted in the tragic death of thirteen civilians.

We also take note of the SMM statement and share the concerns expressed therein, in particular about the continued fighting in residential areas close to Donetsk airport and the use of civilian areas as firing positions in breach of international law which further endangers the lives of civilians.

We remain worried that heavy military equipment continues to be concentrated in areas where they are not permitted according to the Minsk agreements. For instance, a SMM UAV observed 28 tanks within 10 km east of the so called "line of contact" on 26 December while other significant military movements have been reported more recently by the SMM. Furthermore, we continue to witness persistent acts of aggression against SMM personnel and the obstruction of their work, including continuing attempts at obstructing the operation of the UAVs by "jamming" and shooting in areas under the control of the Russian-backed separatist armed groups. We have consistently drawn the FSC's attention, and condemned such developments on the ground as they grossly violate the Minsk agreements and further destabilise the precarious security situation in parts of eastern Ukraine.

Against the background of a lack of progress in the implementation of the Minsk agreements, we are compelled to once again urge all parties, in particular the Russian Federation, to implement their commitments fully and without further delay and to actively engage with a view to finding a peaceful sustainable solution based on respect for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The European Union strongly supports ongoing efforts to find a sustainable political solution to the conflict and

calls on the sides, and in particular on the Russian Federation, to show openness and constructiveness in this context.

In this respect, strict observation of the ceasefire, withdrawal of any illegal and foreign forces, mercenaries and military equipment from eastern Ukraine as well as securing the Ukrainian-Russian state border with expanded international monitoring by the OSCE remain of utmost importance.

Moreover, we deeply regret that the Russian so called "humanitarian convoys" continue to enter Ukrainian territory without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities and without fundamental international humanitarian principles being observed. The European Union calls on all parties to facilitate distribution of humanitarian aid to populations in need on the basis of non-discrimination, cooperation with established humanitarian actors and with the consent of Ukrainian authorities. We will continue providing humanitarian assistance to the suffering people in Ukraine.

The European Union reiterates its commitment to fully implement its policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation. We stand firm in upholding Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and call upon the Russian Federation to do likewise.

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 country NORWAY, member 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 EFTA and the European Economic Area.