



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States remain deeply concerned about the rapid deterioration in the security situation in parts of eastern Ukraine and the rising number of civilian as well as military casualties. We convey our sincere condolences to the families of the victims of the recent shelling incidents in Donetsk city and wish a speedy recovery to those injured.

Against this highly disturbing background, we recall that last week the EU Foreign Affairs Council strongly condemned the indiscriminate shelling of residential areas, especially in Mariupol, and the escalation of fighting in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. It noted evidence of continued and growing support given to the separatists by Russia, which underlines Russia's responsibility.

The European Union expects Russia to exert its influence and to induce the separatists, without delay to stop their hostile actions and live up fully to their commitments under the Minsk agreements. In particular this includes the cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the security zone along the line of contact as foreseen in the Minsk Memorandum, as urgent first steps, which the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine called for in the Joint Statement, following their talks in Berlin on 21 January. All signatories of the Minsk agreements should convene as a matter of urgency within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group to this effect.

The European Union will actively support all diplomatic efforts conducive to creating a new political impetus, notably those currently ongoing under OSCE auspices, and will engage further as necessary. These efforts should be undertaken in good faith and lead to meaningful results. Full implementation of the Minsk agreements which provides the basis for a sustainable political solution to the crisis, respecting Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, must remain the focus of such talks.

Progress must be made on the withdrawal of illegal and foreign armed groups, military equipment, fighters and mercenaries, freeing of all hostages, securing the Ukrainian-Russian border with permanent monitoring by the OSCE, as well as early local elections in parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the framework of the Ukrainian law on interim self-governance and an inclusive national dialogue, notably on issues such as constitutional reform and decentralisation.

The European Union reiterates its appreciation of the OSCE's role, in particular through the presence on the ground and objective reporting of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine as well as the efforts of the Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office in the Trilateral Contact Group. We call on all parties to ensure free and safe access for the SMM's monitors and unmanned aerial vehicles to all parts of Ukraine, including all parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and areas along the state border with Russia.

We remain deeply worried about the substantial amounts of heavy military equipment, including tanks, multiple launch rocket systems and heavy artillery, as well as men in military uniforms without insignia moving west in separatist-controlled areas as reported by the SMM.

The European Union expresses its grave concern about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Donbas region of Ukraine. It urges all parties to fully respect international law, to protect civilians and humanitarian workers and to ensure unhindered access for humanitarian organisations in line with international humanitarian principles and with the agreement of the Ukrainian authorities.

In this respect, we took note of the report of the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk that 90 vehicles crossed into Ukraine and returned back through the Donetsk border checkpoint. We reiterate in this regard our position, including that the Russian so called humanitarian convoys require the consent of the Ukrainian authorities.

We remain committed to support the most vulnerable population affected by the crisis, including in separatist-controlled areas and in Ukraine's neighbouring countries. So far, the EU's humanitarian and early recovery assistance amounts to a total of EUR 95

million. We call on all international donors to respond to the increasing humanitarian needs in a coordinated manner, on the basis of the UN Strategic Response Plan.

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 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 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.