

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°888
Vienna, 4 July 2018**

EU Statement on the Security situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chairman, the EU and its Member States remain deeply concerned about the volatile security situation in eastern Ukraine. Since our last meeting, another two weeks have passed marked by continued violence, use of Minsk-proscribed weapons and civilian suffering. In the week of 18-24 June the SMM corroborated another four civilian casualties on both sides of the contact line and observed fresh damage to civilian property in residential areas caused by shelling. This is unacceptable and must stop.

In this context, we welcome the agreement of the TCG on a 'Harvest Ceasefire' starting from 1 July but are concerned to note SMM reporting indicating that the ceasefire agreement has already been broken. We urge all sides to implement fully this recommitment to a 'comprehensive, sustainable and unlimited ceasefire'. We reiterate our call on all sides to disengage, withdraw heavy weapons and step up efforts on comprehensive mine action, in order to ensure lasting ceasefire as an important step toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We reiterate our concerns over Russia's withdrawal from the JCCC and again call on the Russian Federation to return to the JCCC. We also call on Russia and Ukraine to re-establish the functionality of the JCCC and to strengthen cooperation within its framework.

We remain deeply concerned about the continued intimidation of our SMM monitors in areas held by Russia-backed separatists. We strongly deplore the incident of 22 June, when an SMM patrol was forced to drive on a mine-contaminated road by a member of the armed formations carrying an assault rifle (AK-47). Putting the lives of our monitors at risk is entirely unacceptable. We are also appalled by the explanation provided by the armed formations to the SMM regarding this incident, stating that they were taking fortification and engineering countermeasures, which included laying mines. This is another clear violation of the commitments all sides have signed up to, including Article

6 of the Memorandum of 19 September 2014 and the TCG's Decision on Mine Action of 3 March 2016. Mr. Chairman, the SMM's mandate which calls for full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine including along the Ukrainian-Russian border and on the Crimean peninsula, must be respected and all targeting and obstruction of the SMM's technical equipment must stop. We deplore attempts to blind the Mission by restrictions to its monitoring of weapons in heavy weapons holding areas in Donetsk and Luhansk regions outside of government control, as well as by the continued denial of the SMM's access to checkpoints and areas near the border with the Russian Federation near Izvaryne and Sievernyi as reported by the SMM.

Mr. Chairman on 28 June, the 76th Russian Convoy entered Ukrainian territory at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point, as reported by the OSCE Observer Mission. We deeply regret that, once again, this happened without a full inspection by the Ukrainian border guards and in violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. This does little to allay concerns about the possible military nature of the transported cargo.

We call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and once again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs, to meet these commitments in full. We reiterate our deep concern regarding information about the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia in the conflict zone. We call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists. The ceasefire must be respected. All Minsk-regulated weapons must be withdrawn. All foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries must be removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential.

We recall our unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, and call upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to recognise these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilise the situation and reverse moves that contravene these principles. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and we will not recognise it.

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.