



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°865 Vienna, 25 October 2017

EU Statement on the Security situation in and around Ukraine

1. The European Union and its Member States express once more their deep concern regarding the volatile security situation in eastern Ukraine. In particular we note that in its 18 October weekly report, the SMM reported a 45% increase in ceasefire violations compared to the previous reporting period and a tenfold increase in reports of incidents involving weapons that should have been withdrawn, including the use of MLRS, which was last reported by the SMM on 10th August. This trend is particularly worrying as it is reminiscent of the pattern of events in previous years, when reductions in violence were followed by periods of sustained fighting. Without further stabilising measures – notably the withdrawal of heavy weapons – the risk of further escalation remains. We also regret that casualties and deaths, both military and civilian, continue to occur; we therefore urge all sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect for the ceasefire, the withdrawal of all Minsk-proscribed weapons and recommencement of the stalled disengagement process.
2. We strongly condemn the continued interference with SMM patrols, recent examples of which occurred in “DPR”-controlled Ivanivka and Ozerianivka, where those preventing the SMM patrol had orders from their superiors to do so. In the past week the SMM reported no less than 12 occasions of its freedom of movement being restricted, all in areas outside of government control; these are in blatant contradiction of agreements and are quite deliberate acts designed to prevent the SMM from executing its mandate. We therefore restate our calls for SMM freedom of movement to be assured by all sides. Recalling the deliberate interference for five hours of the SMM camera in Stanytsia Luhanska, we reiterate that the SMM and its technical equipment must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, as agreed by all sides. We urge Russia to exercise its influence over the separatists it backs, to ensure the SMM’s safe access and to prevent such impediments.

3. Mines and unexploded ordnance are a significant restriction on the monitoring ability of the SMM and continue to pose a grave and indiscriminate threat. We are encouraged by reports of mine marking, and welcome the demining near Zolote; we urge both sides to continue this in order to facilitate another much-needed entry-exit checkpoint. However, such positive developments are overshadowed by multiple observations of mines elsewhere, such as Popasna and Pikuzy. We urge all sides to implement their commitments to correctly mark, fence and clear areas contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance.
4. 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.
5. We recall our unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and call upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to strictly observe 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 Crimea and Sevastopol by 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 the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.