



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°813 Vienna, 24 February 2016

EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States recall that over a year ago a full and immediate ceasefire should have entered into force as stipulated by the Minsk Package of Measures. Unfortunately, the security situation in eastern Ukraine is again rapidly deteriorating. The significant increase in ceasefire violations is clearly linked to the failure to withdraw weapons from the security zone. We concur with the OSCE Secretary General that the situation in the region is at its worst point since last September. It is essential to reverse this worrying development, including in Marinka and Horlivka. We continue to stress the need to fully implement the Minsk agreements. As a first step, we urge all sides to honour their commitments and fully implement a sustainable ceasefire in order to move towards a sustainable political settlement in line with OSCE commitments and principles.

We reiterate our call on all sides to unconditionally and verifiably withdraw all weapons covered by the Minsk Package of Measures and the Addendum and to fully cooperate with the SMM to this end. We are concerned by the presence and movement of heavy weapons in the security zone, as well as by their concentration beyond the withdrawal lines but outside storage sites, in particular in areas not controlled by the Ukrainian government.

We deeply regret recent mine-related incidents causing civilian casualties. The presence of improperly fenced off or marked mines further adds to the risks the civilian population in the conflict zone is facing. In this context, we call on all sides to adhere to the agreements reached at the political level to allow for progress on the ground. We also regret delays in demining and repair work to critical infrastructure in prioritised areas due to continued fighting and refusals to provide security

guarantees. The disruption of demining and repair work undermines confidence, with serious implications for civilians.

We strongly condemn all restrictions to the freedom of movement of the SMM, the vast majority of which occur in areas not controlled by the Ukrainian government. We are particularly disturbed by the systematic nature of the impediments to the SMM's work, as well as by the fact that in a number of instances the restrictions are accompanied by threats to SMM monitors by Russia-backed separatists. In the past two weeks, the SMM has reported further instances, including SMM monitors being threatened at gun-point and an SMM UAV being fired upon. Such incidents are very worrying. There is a clear correlation between these incidents and increased violence accompanied by the presence of weapons in the security zone. We reiterate that any impediments to SMM's work are entirely unacceptable and must stop immediately. Full, safe and unhindered access, including along the Ukrainian-Russian state border, is crucial for the SMM to fulfil its mandate. We reiterate that the SMM's mandate covers the whole of Ukraine, including Crimea.

We deeply regret that so-called "humanitarian convoys" from Russia continue to enter Ukrainian territory without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities in clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as without fundamental international humanitarian principles being observed.

We once again underline the need to restore the ceasefire and to fully implement the Minsk agreements, in order to achieve a sustainable political settlement of the conflict, based on full respect for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. 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 their commitments. Foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries must be removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential. We remain concerned about information regarding the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia.

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 and NORWAY, members 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.