

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°810
Vienna, 3 February 2016**

**EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around
Ukraine**

The European Union and its Member States remain deeply concerned about the volatile and tense situation in eastern Ukraine. We echo addresses of Ambassador Sajdik and Chief Monitor Ambassador Apakan to the Permanent Council last week, in which they called for a full and sustainable ceasefire as a basic requirement for peace and normalisation of the security situation in Ukraine.

We note with deep concern the SMM reports about the continued presence and use of weapons of all calibres in the security zone, which should have been withdrawn. We are equally disturbed by the concentration of proscribed weapons beyond the withdrawal lines but outside storage sites as observed by the SMM, in particular in areas controlled by the separatists. Such large concentration of hardware, particularly noticeable in training areas, undermines confidence.

We deplore any attempts to restrict the work and freedom of movement of the SMM observers and UAVs. As underlined by Chief Monitor Ambassador Apakan last week, the SMM needs full and unhindered access to allow monitors to carry out efficient inspections in the entire conflict area, including along the border. SMM's freedom of movement is also indispensable for the mission to be able to fulfil its mandate as tasked by the OSCE Permanent Council. We regret that recently an UAV could not be launched due to impediments by the separatists.

As stated by Ambassadors Sajdik and Apakan last week and also in the SMM reports, the vast majority of freedom of movement restrictions faced by the SMM was experienced in areas not under control of the Ukrainian government, and in particular in border areas. This is particularly worrying as, according to SMM reports, there is a

strong correlation between ceasefire violations and the presence of proscribed weapons, and freedom of movement restrictions imposed on the SMM. As an example, the SMM was denied access to an area controlled by Russia-backed separatists, where a day later the SMM observed large concentration of military hardware while analysing satellite imagery.

We once again underline the need to consolidate 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. 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.