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**STATEMENT BY
AMBASSADOR VÉRONIQUE ROGER-LACAN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE TO THE OSCE,
AT THE 1098th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

28 April 2016

Mr. Chairperson,

I align myself with the European Union statement and should like to make a few comments in a national capacity.

I should like to thank Ambassadors Sajdik and Apakan for their reports and appreciate their personal commitment and that of their teams to a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Mr. Chairperson,
Ambassadors,

The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) monitors carry out remarkable and extremely valuable work in the field, in conditions which we know are extreme. They risk their personal safety in performing their duties every day.

This very issue causes us deep concern. There have been several incidents in recent weeks where SMM patrols have been targeted, which we condemn in the strongest terms. We call on the parties as well as on the participating States in a position to influence them to put an end to these threats and to launch police and judicial inquiries so that the perpetrators can be brought to justice. We, the participating States, the OSCE and the SMM, together with the parties on the ground, share responsibility for the safety of these dedicated staff. We can no longer put up with any further escalation in the attacks against them.

Mr. Chairperson,

You are aware of the importance that the French authorities and all participating States attach to the working and living conditions of the Organization's staff.

We had the opportunity to talk to SMM monitors twice in the past six months and I understand that other participating States have done the same. They all describe their mission as exciting and rewarding. However, they also mentioned certain difficulties in carrying out their mission: human resources management on the ground, team unity, information sharing

at all levels, whether that of specific developments on the ground or of the international negotiations. In particular, we are aware of what is known in French as the “operational loop” which connects observation on the ground with planning of the actions to be taken by the decision-making authorities. We understand that the Secretariat and the SMM are aware of these difficulties and are considering solutions. You can count on my delegation’s support in the joint search for ways to improve matters that will benefit everyone.

Mr. Chairperson,

Turning to demining, I should like to say that this is essential for the safety of the inhabitants as well as our monitors. We are concerned by the recent SMM reports of difficulties in that area – stagnation and even setbacks in the demining of the 12 priority zones, remined zones. Ambassador Sajdik, you drew our attention to this matter last autumn. Consequently most of us responded by providing the all-important financial or in-kind contributions to the demining activities carried out by the parties and to the facilitation by the SMM in that regard. France contributed 800,000 euros to resolving the crisis in and around Ukraine, especially through remediation activities. But as with other issues connected with this conflict, the prospects of improvement remain bleak even if the atmosphere has become more favourable again. We would be very grateful if in future you and the authorities on the ground could provide us with some specific information about the difficulties encountered.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I should like to request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.