



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation Nr 777 Vienna, 28 January 2015

EU Statement on the Unusual Military Activities of the Russian Federation and the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States remain deeply concerned about the sharp deterioration in the security situation in parts of eastern Ukraine resulting from the actions of the Russian-backed illegal armed groups and the rising number of civilian as well as military casualties.

On 24 January residential areas of the city of Mariupol were fired upon from separatist held territory, as reported by the SMM, which cost the lives of thirty civilians, wounding many others and terrorising the innocent population. We agree with the OSCE Chief Monitor in Ukraine Ambassador Apakan that this was indeed a reckless, indiscriminate and disgraceful attack aimed at a heavily-populated residential area whose victims included women, children and the elderly. We commend the UN Secretary General's condemnation of the attack, commenting that rockets appear to have been launched indiscriminately into civilian areas, which would constitute a violation of international humanitarian law.

This came after a series of indiscriminate attacks in the Donbas in the past few days, accompanied by the announcements of further offensives by Russian-backed separatists, who bluntly refuse to observe the cease fire. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the shelling of residential areas and convey our deepest condolences to the families of the victims.

This significant escalation of the crisis has tragic consequences for a population already greatly suffering. As stated by the EU High Representative Mogherini on 24 January it would inevitably lead to a further grave deterioration of relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation. The EU Foreign Affairs Council is meeting tomorrow to address the latest dramatic developments on the ground.

We reiterate our call upon the Russian Federation to use its influence over separatist leaders and to stop any form of military, political or financial support. This would prevent disastrous consequences for all. Those responsible for the escalation must stop their hostile actions and comply with the commitments they signed up to in the Minsk agreements. The cessation of hostilities should be the first step towards the full and swift implementation of the Minsk Protocol of 5 September 2014 as the basis for a sustainable political solution respecting Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

We call notably on the Russian Federation to fully assume its responsibilities in this regard. Strict observation of the ceasefire, withdrawal of any illegal and foreign forces, mercenaries and military equipment deployed from the territory of the Russian Federation as well as playing its part in securing the Ukrainian-Russian state border with expanded international monitoring by the OSCE all remain of paramount importance. We reiterate the need for full and effective control by Ukraine of its border. We call on the Russian Federation to respect this.

The European Union stands fully behind the efforts towards a political solution of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, including the last week's meeting of the Ministers of France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine in Berlin. We expect the Trilateral Contact Group to convene as soon as possible, with participation of all signatories of the Minsk agreements.

We remain worried about the substantial amounts of heavy military equipment, including tanks, multiple launch rocket systems and heavy artillery, being continuously concentrated in areas where their presence is prohibited according to the Minsk Memorandum. Furthermore, we reiterate our strong concern about further groups of illegal and foreign forces entering the Ukrainian territory from the Russian Federation.

We fully back the Ukrainian request for an explanation of Russian unusual military activities, including the concentration of armed forces of the Russian Federation along the state border with Ukraine, as well as the transfer of Russian tactical groups into Ukraine. In this respect, we fully share the view expressed by Ukraine in its Vienna Document notification CBM/UA/15/0002/F10/O that additional Vienna Document inspections offered by the Russian Federation in the areas on its territory adjacent to the Donetsk and Luhansk regions would contribute to alleviating legitimate security concerns of both Ukraine and all other participating States.

Therefore we find the reply by the Russian Federation under reference CBM/RU/15/0006/F41/O unsatisfactory and we reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to make full use, both in letter and spirit, of the OSCE politico-military instruments at hand in order to help deescalate the situation on the ground and restore security, trust and confidence in the OSCE region.

The European Union reiterates its commitment to fully implement its policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation. We stand firm in upholding Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and call upon the Russian Federation to do likewise.

The candidate countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO, ICELAND**, and ALBANIA, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member 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.

** Iceland continues to be a member of EFTA and the European Economic Area.