



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1187  
Vienna, 31 May 2018**

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**EU Statement in response to the Report of the Chief  
Observer of the Observer Mission at the Russian  
Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk, Ambassador Gyorgy  
Varga**

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Ambassador Varga, the EU welcomes you to the Permanent Council and thanks you for your report which was received well in advance of today's Permanent Council. We thank you for that. We commend you and your team for your hard work to implement the mandate of the Observer Mission.

We are also grateful for your participation in the informal meeting that took place yesterday and we would encourage further such meetings, especially given the crucial importance of credible monitoring and re-establishment of Ukrainian control of the Ukrainian-Russian state border.

The European Union finds the border monitoring on the Russian-Ukrainian State border of vital importance. Effective and comprehensive monitoring of this border is an integral part of a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Such a sustainable political solution must re-establish full Ukrainian control over its sovereign territory, including the border. We recall that the Minsk Protocol calls for permanent monitoring of the border and verification by the OSCE and that the Minsk Package of Measures includes a commitment to reinstate full Ukrainian control over its entire international border as part of the foreseen sequence of security and political steps. In a context where SMM access to the border remains systematically restricted and SMM still has not been able to open additional Forward Patrol Bases closer to the Ukraine-Russia state border due to lack of security guarantees from those in effective control of the territory, the work of your mission and a substantial expansion of its mandate become even more important.

We regret that so-called “humanitarian convoys” continue to enter into Ukrainian territory without consent from the Ukrainian government and we are thankful for the SPOT reports you release concerning this violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. As reported by your mission, the 75<sup>th</sup> Convoy of this kind entered Ukrainian territory at the Donetsk Border crossing point on 24 May. Once again, the SMM was prevented from observing the unloading of the trucks of this convoy. The limitations placed on both the SMM and the Border Observation Mission and the incomplete picture this provides of the so-called “Humanitarian Convoys” does little to allay concerns about the possibly military nature of the transported cargo and underlines the urgent need for comprehensive monitoring at the border. We recall that the Minsk agreements foresee that humanitarian aid will be delivered through an international mechanism.

In your report, you underline that the freedom of movement of the observer teams within the border checkpoints continue to be restricted while the use of observation tools such as binoculars or cameras remain prohibited. These restrictions lead to blind spots, as you say, for the observer teams, which we deeply regret. We also regret that the Russian Federation continues to resist an expansion of the Mission and we reiterate our call for a significant expansion of the Mission to all border crossings on the Russia-Ukraine state border currently not under control of the Ukrainian government as well as between these border crossings. The mandate of the mission is currently very limited and its small size does not provide for comprehensive border monitoring. This should be supported and coordinated with border monitoring on the Ukrainian side of the border by the Special Monitoring Mission. We welcome the exchange of information between the Observer Mission and the SMM and we encourage the continuation of this practice and the further development of the cooperation between the two missions.

We acknowledge that the shortness of every mandate cycle puts administrative strain on you and your team. We therefore welcome that the mandate cycle has been extended to four months.

Finally, we would be grateful if you could share plans for the upcoming activities of the Mission. Thank you.

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 UKRAINE, 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.