



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°881
Vienna, 25 April 2018**

EU Statement on the Security situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chairman, since our last exchange in this Forum, the security situation in eastern Ukraine has been marked by ebbs and flows in ceasefire violations and an overall highly volatile security situation along the line of contact. The EU and its Member States deeply regret that despite the recommitment to the ceasefire on 30 March and the significant drop in violence following the recommitment it was not possible to achieve a comprehensive cessation of hostilities. Moreover, it is of great concern that the security situation has deteriorated once again. This disturbing trend was accompanied by a nine-fold increase in the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons over the last week, and, most regrettably, multiple civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure. It is unacceptable that fighting continues around the vicinity of the Donetsk Water Filtration Station and that this has resulted in the injury of five employees.

Mines and other explosive hazards pose another serious risk to civilians in this context. Almost a year since the tragic incident of 23 April 2017, in which Joseph Stone, SMM staff member was killed, no progress has been observed with regard to demining, and mines continue to be laid. Since April 2017, 120 civilians have been injured and 43 have died from the explosion of mines or other devices.

We call on all sides to apply previously agreed principles, such as disengagement, demining and removal of heavy weapons, especially from populated areas, and securing of civilian infrastructure, to ensure successful ceasefire implementation. We also urge all sides to provide the SMM with the information requested in the letter of 5 May 2017 by Chief Monitor Ambassador Apakan regarding detailed maps of contaminated areas, joint plans for mine clearance, as well as marking and fencing off contaminated areas.

Mr. Chairperson, we strongly condemn any incidents targeting the SMM and its assets. We deplore the incident that took place on 5 April near non-government controlled

Kreminets, where three men prevented the SMM from launching a mid-range UAV while two other men were attacking the patrol verbally and charged a weapon near the patrol. This was not the first incident in this area, in the past the SMM has experienced repeated restrictions to its freedom of movement at a check-point near Kreminets. On 13 April in Uzhivka, an area held by Russia-backed separatists, men in military-style clothing fired warning shots into the air when they saw the SMM. Such intimidation of our monitors, occurring almost exclusively in separatist-controlled areas, is unacceptable and must stop immediately. We are also concerned by SMM reports of continued jamming of SMM long range UAVs which were re-launched on 28 March, as well as firing at mid-range and mini UAVs. We urge all sides to respect the SMM's mandate and immediately halt any targeting and jamming of their technical equipment.

Furthermore, members of armed formations systematically denied the SMM access to border crossing points and at a railway station close to the border with the Russian Federation in Luhansk region over the past few weeks while citing "instructions" from their "superiors". The SMM also continued to experience denials of access to Siedove, a town outside government control near the border with the Russian Federation, with senior "DPR" members claiming that Siedove was among a number of restricted cities to which the SMM was not permitted to travel. On 13 April, the SMM was told to leave at the border crossing point near non-government controlled Voznesenivka, as well as at the nearby Chervona Mohyla railway station. This is in clear contravention of the SMM mandate and an expression of disregard to the Mission and its monitors. Such restrictions are unacceptable and call into question the reasons behind these attempts to hide facts on the ground. Without proper and unimpeded monitoring by the SMM, there cannot be a verified improvement of the security situation, which is the basis for further progress on the political track.

The Mission's monitoring of the uncontrolled Ukrainian-Russian state border is further impeded by the lack of security guarantees for the SMM to establish permanent presences in locations closer to the border. This allows only for short visits of the SMM to the border areas in a highly controlled environment and prevents us from receiving a clear picture of the situation on the ground. We recall that the SMM mandate calls for full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine including along the Ukrainian-Russian border and on the Crimean peninsula.

We reiterate our concerns over Russia's withdrawal from the JCCC. Due to this unilateral step, a number of important repair works in areas outside government control have been stalled for lack of security guarantees. We reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to

return to the JCCC. We also call on Russia and Ukraine to re-establish the functionality of the JCCC and to strengthen cooperation within its framework.

Mr. Chairman, on 29 March 2018, the 73rd Russian Convoy entered Ukrainian territory at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point, as reported by the OSCE Observer Mission. We deeply regret that, once again, this happened without a full inspection by the Ukrainian border guards and in violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. In addition, the SMM was prevented from observing the unloading of the trucks of the convoy as reported by the SMM. This does little to allay concerns about the possible military nature of the transported cargo.

We call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full. 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 these commitments in full. We reiterate our deep concern regarding information about the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia in the conflict zone. We call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists. The ceasefire must be respected. All Minsk-regulated weapons must be withdrawn. All foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries must be removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential.

We recall our unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, and call upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to recognise 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 the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to 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 LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA 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.