

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°819
Vienna, 11 May 2016**

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

The European Union and its Member States regret that despite the initial drop in violence, numerous ceasefire violations were recorded, regardless of the commitment made on 29 April in Minsk by all sides to fully respect the ceasefire as of the Easter celebrations. This is a missed opportunity with serious repercussions for the civilian population. We therefore reiterate our call for effective and immediate steps to fully disengage, deescalate and observe a strict ceasefire. These actions together with the full withdrawal of all Minsk-regulated weapons are necessary steps in order to move toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We welcome the Foreign Ministers' meeting today in the Normandy Format and hope it will ensure progress to this end.

We remain concerned about the presence and use of weapons in the security zone in violation of withdrawal lines. We are deeply disturbed by the large concentration of weapons in and around Luhansk city, including tanks, multi-launch rocket systems (MLRS), howitzers, anti-tank guns and surface-to-air missile systems, allegedly brought to the city in the context of the events marking the end of the Second World War. Such steps are in clear violation of the Minsk agreements and undermine trust among the sides as well as towards the SMM. We therefore repeat our call to unconditionally and verifiably withdraw all Minsk-regulated weapons from the security zone.

We strongly condemn the continued restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement, the vast majority of which occur in areas not under the control of the Ukrainian government. Such actions are unacceptable and must stop immediately. The SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian state border.

We regret that little progress has been achieved in the context of the TCG's decision on mine action, thus exposing civilians further to the risks stemming from mines and UXOs. We urge the sides to adhere to their commitments and to strengthen their efforts in order to achieve tangible progress on the ground.

We remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments, including by agreeing on the modalities of local elections in certain parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR, 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 these commitments in full. The ceasefire must be respected. All Minsk-regulated weapons must be withdrawn and foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential. We reiterate our concern regarding information about the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia in eastern Ukraine.

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, LIECHTENSTEIN 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.