

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°852  
Vienna, 10 May 2017**

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**EU Statement on the security situation in and around  
Ukraine**

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The European Union and its Member States reiterate their strong support to all steps necessary for a swift, thorough and impartial investigation into the tragic incident on 23<sup>rd</sup> April near Pryshyb, an area held by Russia-backed separatists. This reveals once more the increasingly dangerous environment in which the SMM has to operate. Public statements by separatists blaming the fatal incident of 23<sup>rd</sup> April on the SMM are irresponsible and unhelpful.

We condemn the continued incidents where SMM monitors are threatened, harassed or intimidated or prevented from fulfilling their mandate and call on all participating States to join us in our condemnation of such behaviour. In this regard, we strongly condemn the recent incident in separatist-controlled Petrivske where an SMM monitor was sexually harassed by a man armed with a machine gun. We echo Chief Monitor Apakan's demand for a swift and unequivocal response, which must include identification of the individual responsible and full application of appropriate measures to ensure that such incidents are not repeated. We call on Russia to use its influence over the separatists it backs to ensure that this happens. In addition, incidents were recorded in separatist-controlled Molodizhne and Kruta Hora on 28 April, as well as in Stanytsia Luhanska disengagement area on 1 May where monitors observed explosions and small-arms fire in close proximity to their position. We urge the JCCC to follow up on these incidents that gravely undermine the work of the Mission. We reiterate that the SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including along the Russian-Ukrainian state border. We regret that the monitoring of border areas, not under the control of the Ukrainian government, continues to be hindered by those in effective control of these areas by denying the SMM the security guarantees, which would enable it enhance its monitoring through opening additional forward patrol bases and patrol hubs.

Mr. Chairman, the security situation remains highly volatile. Despite the lowering number of ceasefire violations, no progress regarding disengagement has been made and in the 3 May weekly report the SMM registered an increase in the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons compared with the previous week. This is despite the fact that the SMM's ability to operate and observe has been limited following the fatal incident of 23 April. We urge all sides to implement their commitments towards a peaceful solution of the conflict and to ensure full respect of the ceasefire, the withdrawal of all Minsk-proscribed weapons and complete disengagement. We particularly emphasise the commitment made by the sides regarding comprehensive mine action. Continued civilian casualties on both sides of the contact line caused by mines and unexploded ordnance stress the need for the sides to abide by their responsibility to mark, fence and clear contaminated areas. We regret that the JCCC has not yet provided an update regarding a joint plan on demining and the removal of unexploded ordnance. We urge Russia and Ukraine to make the JCCC live up to its role identified in the TCG's Decision on Mine Action on 3 March 2016 and contribute to improving the security situation for the SMM and civilians.

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, 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 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.