



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1176
Vienna, 15 February 2018**

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

Ambassador Varga, the EU welcomes you to the Permanent Council and thanks you for your report. We commend you and your team for your work to implement the mandate of the Observer Mission.

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, which re-establishes 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.

In this vein we regret that so-called “humanitarian convoys” continue to enter into Ukrainian territory and we are thankful for the SPOT reports you release concerning this violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. We recall that the Minsk agreements foresee that humanitarian aid will be delivered through an international mechanism.

We deeply regret that the Russian Federation continues to resist an expansion of the Observer Mission. Its mandate is currently very limited and its small size does not provide for a comprehensive border monitoring. We therefore reiterate our call for a significant expansion of the Observer Mission to all border crossings on the Russia-Ukraine state border currently not under control of the Ukrainian government as well as monitoring between these border crossings. 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 share your call for extending your mandate for even more than four months at a time and acknowledge that the shortness of every mandate cycle puts unnecessary strains on you and your team. We further regret that the use of observation tools such as binoculars and cameras continue to be prohibited and we underline the need for sufficient equipment for the Observer Mission in order to monitor movements on the border more effectively. We also underline the need for sufficient freedom of movement for your team within border checkpoints to ensure that they have an unrestricted view with which to monitor activity at the border.

Finally, we would be grateful if you could share plans for the upcoming activities of the Mission and if there are any plans related to the reporting format. 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, 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.