



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1040 Vienna, 17 February 2015

EU Statement in response to OSCE SMM Chief Monitor Ambassador Apakan, CiO Special Representative Ambassador Tagliavini, and ODIHR Director Link

The European Union thanks the speakers for their timely appearance before the Permanent Council. We welcome the start of a ceasefire in eastern Ukraine as part of the “package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements” agreed in Minsk on 12 February. We note from today’s briefing by Ambassador Apakan and from reports of the Special Monitoring Mission the assessment that the ceasefire is largely holding. However, we are extremely concerned about ceasefire violations in certain areas, in particular in and around Debaltseve where heavy fighting is continuing and Russian-backed separatists are attempting to take control. We urge the separatists to immediately halt attacks. We deeply regret that the separatists have denied SMM access to Debaltseve. This is unacceptable. The ceasefire must be respected throughout the area of conflict. Statements by representatives of the separatists that the ceasefire arrangement does not include Debaltseve are not in accordance with the agreement reached in Minsk. We expect Russia to exert its influence on the separatists to fully live up to their commitments made.

The Minsk package offers a way forward to a comprehensive, sustainable and peaceful resolution to the crisis in Eastern Ukraine, in full respect of international law and OSCE principles. It is based on the full respect for Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, as was declared by the Heads of State and Government. We urge all sides to adhere strictly to the provisions of the package and to carry out its measures without delay. All parties should refrain from actions that would hinder the full implementation of the Minsk package. In this context, we note the many SMM observations of heavy military equipment in areas controlled by the separatists. This corresponds to evidence of continued and growing support given to the separatists by Russia. This underlines Russia’s responsibility. In this context, we

recall that re-establishing Ukrainian control over its borders remains essential, as reiterated in Minsk. We likewise recall that the Minsk protocol calls for continuous monitoring of the border by the OSCE.

The SMM has a vital role to play in facilitating the implementation of the Minsk package. We commend Ambassador Apakan and his staff for responding quickly and for enhancing the SMM's capacity in eastern parts of Ukraine. We call on all signatories to take action in line with the letter of Ambassador Apakan dated 13 February. That includes providing security and safety and unrestricted access for the monitors and UAVs to all parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and along the border with Russia. There is an urgent need to act now to enable the SMM to carry out its tasks of monitoring and verifying the ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy armament as well as withdrawal of all foreign armed forces, military equipment and mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine. We note the request to participating States for additional specialized staff and equipment. We urge all participating states to respond quickly and generously. Rest assured that the EU will continue to strongly support the SMM. The EU and its Member States will continue to provide qualified staff, appropriate equipment and financial contributions.

We once again express our support for the work of Ambassador Tagliavini and the Trilateral Contact Group of Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE-chairmanship. We commend Ambassador Tagliavini for her tireless efforts in facilitating the negotiations in Minsk. The Trilateral Contact Group must play an essential role in promoting the implementation of the Minsk package.

We welcome the comments made by ODIHR director Link and ODIHR's stated readiness to monitor local elections in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. We underline the importance we attach to local elections based on Ukrainian law and OSCE standards.

We recall that the "package of Measures" agreed in Minsk calls for humanitarian aid to be delivered through an international mechanism. We deeply regret that a Russian so-called humanitarian convoy entered Ukrainian territory on Sunday, without the

consent of the Ukrainian authorities and in clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and without fundamental international humanitarian principles being observed.

The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We once again urge Russia to recognise by acts these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute to stabilise the situation and reverse moves that contravene these principles. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and we will not recognise it.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.