



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°875 Vienna, 31 January 2018

EU Statement on the Security situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chairperson, the European Union and its Member States remain concerned by the consistently high level of armed violence in eastern Ukraine. We deeply regret that civilians continue to suffer from the conflict due to the proximity of ongoing violence as well as the presence of mines and UXOs, as reported by the SMM. We once again call on all sides to strictly observe the ceasefire, to withdraw all Minsk-proscribed weapons, to disengage and to ensure comprehensive action on mine clearance.

We condemn the continued restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement and other impediments to its mandate, the vast majority of which occur in areas outside of government control. In the period of 15-21 January, in addition to restrictions due to the presence of mines, 6 out of 7 occasions of restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement occurred in areas outside of government control. This is unacceptable and must stop immediately. We reiterate that the SMM and its technical equipment must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine including along the Ukrainian-Russian border.

In this context, we regret that the monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian border by the SMM remains limited. During the week of 15 - 21 January the SMM visited border areas not controlled by the Government on ten occasions and stayed at each for between 25 minutes and an hour. Monitoring of these areas was limited by the distance from the SMM's premises and the refusal of those in control to provide security guarantees enabling the SMM to open additional forward patrol bases and patrol hubs in the area. This contradicts the SMM's mandate and prevents us from having a full picture of the situation at the uncontrolled border between Ukraine and Russia. In addition, we noted with concern the SMM report of 27 January according to which the SMM spoke with an so called "LPR" member who was wearing the same armband previously worn by the Russian Federation Armed Forces officers of the JCCC.

The lack of security guarantees by separatists further hinders repairs to essential civilian infrastructure and maintenance of SMM technical observation assets. As reported by the SMM the separatists approved only one out of 44 requests for security guarantees for repair works between 30 December 2017 and 21 January which resulted in longstanding delays for critical repair and further worsened the security and the humanitarian situation. This negative trend further adds to our concerns. In this context we underline the important role that the JCCC played in ensuring repair and maintenance of infrastructure. Hence, we reiterate our concerns over Russia's withdrawal from the JCCC and we call on the Russian Federation to return to the JCCC. We call on Russia and Ukraine to re-establish the functionality of the JCCC and to strengthen cooperation within its framework.

Mr. Chairman, on 25 January 2018, the 71st 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. 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 recognized borders, and call upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to recognize 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 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.