



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°896 Vienna, 24 October 2018

EU Statement on the Security situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States are deeply concerned by the deteriorating security situation along the line of contact. In the period of 8-14 October, the SMM recorded a two-fold increase in ceasefire violations and observed more instances of the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons compared with the previous reporting period. The security situation over the past week continued to be volatile with ebbs and flows in ceasefire violations along the contact line.

We deeply regret the severe negative consequences of the conflict on the civilian population living in the vicinity of the line of contact. On 13 October a woman and a girl were killed by shelling in non-government controlled Zolote-5/Mykhailivka, a five year old boy was injured by shrapnel on 6 October at the same place. On 18 October the SMM saw damage to a civilian car carrying a family with two children - 18 months and seven years old - at the entry-exit checkpoint in Marinka assessed as caused by a small-arms round. Luckily, nobody was injured in this incident.

We reiterate our call on all sides to disengage, withdraw heavy weapons and step up efforts on comprehensive mine action, in order to ensure a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire as an important step toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

We condemn the ongoing restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement, occurring predominantly in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations. In the period of 8-14 October, in addition to restrictions posed by mines and unexploded ordnance, the SMM's freedom of movement was restricted 33 times - four in government-controlled areas and 29 in non-government-controlled areas. The Mission's access was again restricted in areas near the border with the Russian Federation. Over the past week, restrictions to the SMM's access near the uncontrolled Russian-Ukrainian state border continued: On 16 October the SMM's access remained restricted near Yuzhna-Lomuvatka,

Novoazovsk, Zaichenko and Siedove, by members of Russia-backed armed formations citing 'orders of superiors', or 'pointing to an event going on in the area'. On 17 and 18 October again the SMM's access remained restricted near Verkhnohshyrovkivske for the same reasons. We continue to condemn all violations of the SMM mandate and recall that the SMM staff and their technical equipment must have safe, secure and unimpeded access throughout Ukraine. This includes the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and the entire stretch of Ukrainian-Russian border along Donbas, currently and temporarily outside of the control of the Ukrainian government. We are concerned over the reports of jamming and firing at the SMM UAVs. Any restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement as well as targeting and obstruction of the SMM's technical equipment are unacceptable and must stop.

Madame Chairperson, we reiterate our call to the Russian delegation to explain the presence in Ukraine of sophisticated Russian military equipment and note that we have still not received an adequate answer. On 16 October an SMM long-range UAV spotted again vehicles in a non-government-controlled area of Donetsk region moving on a dirt road in the middle of the night away from and towards the border with the Russian Federation where there are no border crossing facilities. This incident again gives rise to serious concerns regarding the nature of the cargo transported and demands an explanation by the Russian Federation.

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 recognised borders, and call upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to recognise 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 EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as 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.