



EUROPEAN UNION
OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°909
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EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chairman, we gather every week in this hall to discuss the dire security situation in the conflict zone, as consequence of Russia's acts of aggression against Ukraine, its illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula and destabilising actions in eastern Ukraine. The European Union and its Member States, as well as many other delegations around this table, stress every week the need to ensure safe and unhindered access of the civilian, unarmed OSCE SMM monitors throughout Ukraine, to provide us with reliable information about the situation on the ground.

In this context we strongly condemn the most recent incident on 26th February, when despite security guarantees five small-arms shots were fired close to an SMM patrol consisting of 6 member and 2 armoured vehicles when positioned at the western edge of Zolote-5/Mykhailivka (non-government controlled) and subsequently the mission members heard the sound of bullets flying about 10 m over their heads. This is unacceptable.

Mr. Chairman, we are appalled by the continuous interference with the SMM's work and its technical equipment, occurring predominantly in the areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations.

We condemn the repeated use of dual GPS jamming which may have contributed to the crash of one of the SMM's Long Range UAVs near non-government controlled Berdianka on 18 February. This loss is of great concern for us, noting that this is the second LR UAV which has recently been lost, and also noting the substantial negative impact this has on the operational effectiveness of the Mission. During the weekend mini-UAVs have also been jammed in operations in non-government controlled areas near Makiivka, Sarabash and Stvia resulting in the loss of one of the devices. We underline that any interference with SMM technical equipment goes against the letter and spirit of the Minsk agreements. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

We are deeply concerned by SMM reports of explosions that occurred in Donetsk City on the morning of 18th February, including within a few hundred meters of the SMM residence. The SMM assessed the cause of the explosions to have been the detonation of explosive devices without casing. We call on the Russian Federation and the armed formations it backs to ensure the safety and security of the SMM at all times, in accordance with their commitments under the Minsk Agreements and the SMM mandate. We also call on all sides to take all appropriate measure to ensure the safety of the civilian population.

We condemn the ongoing restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement; over the past two weeks the SMM was hampered again predominantly in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations in conducting its work. We strongly condemn these attempts to obstruct the Mission. In addition, a number of restrictions related to UAV jamming were registered.

Mr. Chairman, as reported by the SMM two civilians were killed and another injured in a mine explosion near the Novotroitske entry-exit checkpoint near Berezhove close to the contact line. We are extremely saddened by this incident which again shows the need for the sides to step up efforts on comprehensive mine action, as mines continue to pose a serious threat to the civilians and our SMM monitors.

Mr. Chairman, during our discussion two weeks ago, we have asked the delegation of the Russian Federation to explain the presence of the highly sophisticated Russian mobile jamming communication system R-330ZH "ZHITEL" in eastern Ukraine, as observed by the SMM on 3rd and 4th February and thus further violating Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Instead of providing a reasonable clarification, the distinguished Russian representative accused the EU Member States of providing military support to Ukraine which may not be in line with internal EU regulations. We would like to stress that those EU Member States, who export military technology and equipment to Ukraine, implement all requirements and criteria of the European Union Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment. Having said that, we suggest an end to such groundless allegations against EU Member States and that we focus our discussions on the conflict, its real causes and on the acts of aggression against Ukraine by this participating State which backs financially and militarily the illegal armed formations.

We remain concerned about Russia's violations of international law in the Azov Sea and the Kerch Strait. We are dismayed at the use of force by Russia which, against the backdrop of increasing militarisation in the area, is unacceptable and we call strongly on Russia to release the captured vessels, their crew and equipment unconditionally and without delay.

We remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full in order to achieve a sustainable political solution to the conflict in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and once again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations 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 armed formations. 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 stabilising the situation and reversing moves that contravene these principles. We strongly condemn the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces since February 2014 and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, which we will not recognise. We express our deep concern about the ongoing large-scale militarisation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia, which continues to impact the security situation in the Black Sea region and beyond.

The Candidate Countries the REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, 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 Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.