



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation Nr 783 Vienna, 18 March 2015

EU Statement on the Unusual Military Activities of the Russian Federation and the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States reiterate our strong support to the package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk agreements adopted in February 2015 in Minsk. We welcome the overall decrease of active fighting along the line of contact and in particular the general decline in the use of heavy weapons in almost all locations, as observed by the SMM, which is an indication that at least some of the withdrawal of heavy weapons may be genuine. This remains however to be duly monitored and verified by the SMM.

At the same time, we note with growing concern that heavy fighting continues in strategic hotspots such as Donetsk airport and the area east of Mariupol. We strongly condemn in this regard the Russia-backed separatists' offensive in the area of Shyrokyne to which the SMM is consistently denied access. We recall that any attempts to gain territorial advantages will be a clear breach of the Minsk agreements and seriously undermine all efforts promoting a sustainable political solution. We urge the Russian Federation to exert its influence over the separatists to fully implement their commitments.

Persistent restrictions of the SMM access to the security zone as well as continuing presence of heavy weapons in areas controlled by the separatists give rise to serious concern and are unacceptable. We call for the immediate withdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment, as well as mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine under monitoring of the OSCE as well as disarmament of all illegal groups. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard.

We remind that the strict, comprehensive and sustainable compliance with the ceasefire regime and the verifiable withdrawal of heavy weapons are essential for the successful implementation of the Package of Measures agreed in Minsk. We therefore strongly urge all sides to provide the SMM with the requested heavy weapons baseline information and

necessary security guarantees as well as to ensure unconditional and unfettered SMM access to the areas under their control.

We call for the full implementation of all aspects of the Minsk agreements by all signatories, including substantial and effective OSCE monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. We reiterate that re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border with Russia remains of paramount importance.

Furthermore, we draw attention that the Package of Measures calls for humanitarian aid to be delivered through an international mechanism. In this context, we express our deep regret that further Russian so called humanitarian convoys entered Ukrainian territory on 13 and 15 March in violation of Ukraine's national legislation, recognised international practices, as well as previously agreed modalities with the ICRC. We recall our position that this act constitutes a clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In addition, we call for respect of international humanitarian law and principles, notably in ensuring safe passage for all those who want to leave the area and for humanitarian workers to deliver aid.

We take note of the information circulated by the Russian Federation under reference number CBM/RU/15/0034/F41/O about the large-scale combat readiness inspections taking place in the Northern and Western Military Districts of the Russian Federation.

We remain concerned however about Russia's military exercises conducted in areas adjacent to Ukraine as well as the continuous Russian military build-up in the Ukrainian region of Crimea. We recall therefore that exercising strict restraint in carrying out and sharing information about on-going and planned military activities in the bordering areas with Ukraine, even if they do not fall under the provisions of the Vienna Document, would be important steps towards rebuilding security, trust and confidence in the region severely affected by the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by Russia.

One year on from the holding of the illegal and illegitimate referendum and the subsequent illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation the European Union remains fully committed to Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. The European Union does not recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation and continues to condemn this act of violation of international law. The

European Union will remain committed to fully implement, including through restrictive measures, its policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation.

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 NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA 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.

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