



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°828 Vienna, 14 September 2016

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States welcome the substantial decrease in violence following the recommitment by the sides to the ceasefire on 1 September. This shows that effective reduction of violence is possible if all sides display the necessary political will. The situation on the ground remains, however, fragile and unpredictable. We therefore urge all sides to consolidate the recent progress by ensuring full, swift and verifiable disengagement, strictly adhering to the ceasefire and verifiably withdrawing all Minsk-regulated weapons.

We are concerned by the continuing restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement, and note in particular the SMM's Thematic Report dated 23 August which states that 80% of restrictions on the SMM's freedom of movement occurred in areas not controlled by the Ukrainian government. We condemn in particular cases where monitors were threatened, refused access, or the SMM's equipment was damaged. Incidents, such as the shelling that led to the temporary evacuation of a Forward Patrol Base, threatening monitors at gun point, setting an SMM vehicle on fire, or destruction of an SMM camera, are unacceptable and must stop immediately. They are expression of disregard for the SMM and seriously undermine the Mission and its monitoring ability. Such incidents must be investigated and the perpetrators held accountable. We are disappointed by the lack of robust and rapid response to such restrictions by the JCCC and urge Russia and Ukraine to step up their efforts in order to increase its effectiveness.

We call on all sides in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups to agree on steps toward the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. This includes further measures to enhance the security situation and agreeing on modalities of holding local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in

accordance with Ukrainian legislation, OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. We recall our firm position that established conditions for ODIHR monitoring, including ensuring security and access, must be met.

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 express our deep concern on the conduct of the military exercise "Kavkaz-2016" in Crimea and Sevastopol.

We recall our unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and call upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to strictly observe 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 Crimea and Sevastopol by 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, and NORWAY, members 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.