



EUROPEAN UNION
OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°874
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EU Statement on the Security situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chairperson, the European Union and its Member States are deeply concerned by the increase in ceasefire violations over the last week. The armed violence in the week of 8-14 January reached similar levels as in the weeks prior to the 23 December re-commitment to ceasefire. We are also concerned by the SMM's recent observations of the building of new trenches and fortifications and the reoccupation of positions previously observed as abandoned. This is particularly worrying in light of the recent increase in ceasefire violations. As long as weapons and troops remain close to the line of contact, the possibility of sharp increases in violence will remain. Parallel to the increased number of ceasefire violations, the SMM observed a rise in the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons, notably on 320 occasions compared with six recorded in the previous week. The SMM reported civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure, including critical infrastructure over the last week. 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 fulfilling its mandate, the vast majority of which continue to occur in areas outside of government control. Over the last week, in addition to restrictions caused due to the presence of mines, out of 15 occasions the SMM's freedom of movement was restricted 13 times 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. Due to poor road conditions, limited daylight hours and long distances, the Mission still was only able to conduct visits averaging only about 50

minutes at each border crossing point. Continued refusal to provide security guarantees for the SMM to open additional forward patrol bases in areas not under government control further hindered proper monitoring in line with the SMM's mandate. We note that last week the Border Observation Mission recorded over a 100% increase in the number of trucks observed crossing the border in both directions. They also registered nearly three times as many tanker trucks. We can only speculate as to the reasons behind this increase in traffic. This free flow of vehicles across an uncontrolled border underlines the need for full access throughout all Ukraine by the SMM, including the Ukraine-Russia border, as agreed by all OSCE participating States

We reiterate our concerns over Russia's withdrawal from the JCCC and we call on the Russian Federation to return to the JCCC as soon as possible. We call on Russia and Ukraine to re-establish the functionality of the JCCC and to strengthen cooperation within its framework. The JCCC has served as a stabilizing mechanism in co-ordinating local ceasefires and ensuring repair and maintenance of infrastructure vital for the civilian population on both sides of the line of contact. The JCCC has also supported the operations of the SMM and contributed to ensuring the Mission's safety.

Mr. Chairperson, last week, Russia referred to the crisis in and around Ukraine as a "civil war". This characterization is wrong. Actually, the situation we are facing is a result of a blatant violation of international law and basic OSCE principles by the Russian Federation following its illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and destabilizing actions in eastern Ukraine.

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 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.