



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°829 Vienna, 21 September 2016

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States acknowledge the relative calm in eastern Ukraine during the first weeks of September. However, the situation in general remains tense and unpredictable and we are concerned by the ebbs and flows in ceasefire violations as reported by the SMM. We regret that the sides have been using the relatively calm situation to maintain and rotate weapons and equipment, conduct training, and reinforce their positions, as reported by the SMM, and that no progress in terms of withdrawal of weapons and disengagement was noted so far. We underline recent calls by Foreign Ministers of EU Member States to respect the ceasefire and we once again urge the 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 underline the important role the SMM plays in this regard and stress the need for the SMM to have full, safe and unfettered access throughout the conflict area. We condemn any restrictions to the SMM's work, as these seriously undermine the Mission and its monitoring ability.

We regret that little progress has been achieved on demining, despite some minor steps forward, as reported by the SMM. Mines and unexploded ordnance pose great risk for civilians, who often have to use alternative routes off the main roads to avoid long queues at crossing points. The SMM spot report of 15 September on the uncontrolled detonation of an anti-personnel mine OZM-72 once again underlined the urgency of the issue. We condemn in the strongest terms the use of anti-personnel mines which are prohibited by the Ottawa Convention and urge the sides to step up their efforts on mine action in accordance with their commitments under the Minsk Memorandum and the renewed commitment to the mine action decision of the Trilateral Contact Group.

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, as most recently also indicated in the OHCHR Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine of 15 September. 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, 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, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European

Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.