



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1105 Vienna, 16 June 2016

EU Statement in Response to the Report by the Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border

The European Union warmly welcomes the Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian checkpoints at Gukovo and Donetsk, Mr Flavien Schaller, to the Permanent Council for the first time. We thank him for his report and presentation.

Despite its limited mandate and small size, the Mission continues to provide evidence of Russian support for the separatists. This includes regular reports of a high number of people, more than 1,950 during the reporting period, crossing the border wearing military style clothes and camouflage, some with separatist insignia.

We reiterate our deep regret that Russian so-called “humanitarian convoys” continue to cross the border without proper control or inspection by Ukrainian authorities. On 26 May, a 51st Russian convoy was observed by the Observer Mission. These convoys continue without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities and in clear violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and without fundamental international humanitarian principles being observed.

The deteriorating security situation in eastern Ukraine has again underlined the importance of border monitoring in light of information about the continued presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia in separatist-held areas. Effective and comprehensive monitoring of the Russian-Ukrainian state border is an integral part of a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments, which re-establishes full Ukrainian control over its sovereign territory. We recall that the Minsk Protocol calls for permanent monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian border and verification by the OSCE with the creation of security zones in the border regions

of Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Moreover, the Minsk Package of Measures includes a commitment to reinstate full Ukrainian control over its entire border.

To this end, we welcome the meeting convened yesterday by the Chairmanship-in-Office to continue discussions improving transparency along the Ukrainian-Russian state border. We hope to build on this, and the proposals put forward by the Conflict Prevention Centre, to strengthen border monitoring in the near future. This must include unfettered SMM access to the parts of Ukraine's border currently not under its control and the removal of all obstacles preventing the setup of the three Forward Patrol Bases and two Patrol Hubs proposed by the SMM near the state border.

The Observer Mission's very limited mandate and its small size does not provide for a comprehensive border monitoring. We regret that the Russian Federation continues to resist expansion of the Observer Mission despite the calls from the overwhelming majority of participating States for a significant expansion to all border crossings currently not under control of the Ukrainian government as well as monitoring between these border crossings. We call on Russia to engage constructively in the ongoing discussions in Vienna.

In the meantime, we urge Russia to remove the access restrictions at the Gukovo border crossing that limit the Mission's staff to a small fraction of the area of the crossing point, and ensure availability of convenient positioning for monitors at the Donetsk BCP to be able to observe relevant details of the border crossing. We urge them also to agree the other small measures, such as the use of binoculars, to improve the effectiveness of monitoring set out by the Chief Observer in this and previous reports.

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.