



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°906
Vienna, 30 January 2019**

**EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around
Ukraine**

The European Union and its Member States remain deeply concerned over the volatile and unpredictable security situation in the conflict zone and the negative impact on the lives of civilians. The SMM continues to report about civilian casualties and observe damage in residential areas as a result of gunfire: On 22 January a member of a State Emergency Service was hit by a projectile during repair works in the area of the Krasnohorivka gas distribution station. On the same day in government-controlled Chermalyk a functioning kindergarten and a two-storey apartment building were damaged by small arms fire. This is unacceptable and we reiterate our call on all sides to disengage, withdraw heavy weapons and step up efforts on comprehensive mine action, in order to ensure a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire as an important step toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

We deplore any impediments to the SMM's freedom of movement as well as interference with the Mission's technical equipment continuing largely in areas controlled by Russia-backed separatists. We recall that the SMM staff and their technical equipment must have safe, secure and unimpeded access throughout Ukraine. This includes the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and the entire stretch of Ukrainian-Russian border along Donbas, currently and temporarily outside of the control of the Ukrainian government.

We remain concerned about the recent escalation in the Azov Sea and the Kerch Strait and Russia's violations of international law. We are dismayed at the use of force by Russia which, against the backdrop of increasing militarisation in the area, is unacceptable and we call strongly on Russia to release the captured vessels, their crew and equipment unconditionally and without delay.

We remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full in order to achieve a sustainable political solution to the conflict in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and once again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations 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 armed formations. 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 recognised borders, and call upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to recognise these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilising the situation and reversing moves that contravene these principles. We strongly condemn the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces since February 2014 and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, which we will not recognise. We express our deep concern about the ongoing large-scale militarisation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia, which continues to impact the security situation in the Black Sea region and beyond.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

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