



EUROPEAN UNION
OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°908
Vienna, 13 February 2019

EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chairman, the European Union and its Member States remain concerned by the volatile and unpredictable security situation along the line of contact. Over the past week, the SMM continued to register ceasefire violations on a daily basis, as well as the presence and the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons. We deeply regret the negative repercussions of the conflict on civilians. We strongly condemn the continued shelling of civilian infrastructure, as well as the presence of weapons and military check points close to residential areas posing further risks to the civilian population. Mr. Chairman, let us once again emphasise: This regrettable situation is a consequence of Russia's acts of aggression against Ukraine, its illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula and destabilising actions in eastern Ukraine.

We have repeatedly expressed our concerns in this Forum regarding information about the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia in the conflict zone. We have never received clarification by the delegation of the Russian Federation to this end. Last week again, on several occasions (on 3 and 4 February), a mobile jamming communication system assessed as R-330ZH "ZHITEL" was spotted by the SMM in areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations. This observation is worrying also in the context of the continued jamming of the SMM's long-range UAVs. We therefore ask the delegation of the Russian Federation to explain the presence of this highly sophisticated Russian system in eastern Ukraine.

We condemn any interference with the SMM's work and its technical equipment, occurring predominantly in the areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations. Over the last week (28 January - 3 February) the SMM was restricted on 11 occasions in its freedom of movement - all in areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations, including at checkpoints near Zaichenko and Bezimenne, where the Mission has encountered consistent restrictions since the middle of 2018. The armed formations also continued to restrict the SMM's access near the

border with the Russian Federation in areas not under government control. We strongly condemn these attempts to blind the Mission, especially in the context in which the Russian Federation opposes any significant expansion of the observation of the uncontrolled Russian-Ukrainian state border.

We remain concerned about Russia's violations of international law in the Azov Sea and the Kerch Strait. 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 UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA 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.