



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°876
Vienna, 7 February 2018**

EU Statement on the Security situation in and around Ukraine

1. Mr. Chairperson, the European Union and its Member States are concerned by the volatile security situation in eastern Ukraine. The situation remains tense and unpredictable. Civilians are the ultimate victims of the fighting as well as of dangers posed by mines and UXOs. We regret to read in the SMM reports about civilian casualties as well as damage to civilian infrastructure. We deplore shelling and gunfire in residential areas, as well as the use of weapons in other populated areas, such as near checkpoints, all of which continue to endanger civilians. 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.
2. Mr. Chairperson, it is unacceptable that small arms were fired in the direction of an SMM patrol and targeted an SMM unmanned aerial vehicle, as reported in the Spot report and the Daily Report of 3 February. SMM monitors and equipment must not be put at risk or targeted. Any restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement are unacceptable as they violate its mandate. Again, as in previous weeks, the majority of these restrictions occurred in areas outside of government control. In the period of 22-28 January, in addition to restrictions due to the presence of mines, the SMM was restricted on 11 occasions, out of which 10 were registered in areas outside of government control. In addition, the SMM's monitoring of the uncontrolled border between Ukraine and Russia remained limited due to the continuous refusal of those in control of these areas to provide security guarantees for the SMM to open forward patrol bases which would allow comprehensive monitoring. We reiterate that the SMM and its technical equipment must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine including along the Ukrainian-Russian border.

3. We reiterate our concerns over Russia's withdrawal from the JCCC and we call on the Russian Federation to return to the JCCC. On the 26 January, the SMM spoke with an so called "LPR" member who was wearing the same armband previously worn by the Russian Federation Armed Forces officers of the JCCC. The JCCC is a coordination body between Ukraine and Russia and there can be no substitute for full Russian participation in the JCCC. We call on Russia and Ukraine to re-establish the functionality of the JCCC and to strengthen cooperation within its framework.
4. 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.
5. 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, 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.