

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°885
Vienna, 23 May 2018**

EU Statement on the Security situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chairman, since our last discussion in this Forum another week has passed with further civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure. The SMM continued to register ceasefire violations along the line of contact, increased presence of Minsk-proscribed weapons, military formations in close proximity to each other, as well as presence of mines, including those newly laid. The EU and its Member States note with deep concern the statement of SMM CM Ambassador Apakan of 18 May which speaks of “the deteriorating security situation in the wider area around the Donetsk Filtration Station which poses a threat to the facility, its workers and monitoring officers of the OSCE SMM”. We urge all sides to comply with the obligations they have signed up to. We call on all sides to step up efforts on comprehensive mine action, take concrete steps to create safety zones around essential civilian infrastructure, to disengage and to withdraw heavy weapons, in order to ensure lasting ceasefire as an important step toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We underline Russia’s responsibility in this regard including its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to achieve progress. We also reiterate our concerns over Russia’s withdrawal from the JCCC and again call on the Russian Federation to return to the JCCC.

Mr. Chairman, intimidation and threatening of unarmed civilian SMM monitors is entirely unacceptable. We condemn in the strongest possible terms once again the incident that took place last week near the DFS when bullets flew over the heads of our monitors despite explicit security guarantees provided by the sides, as well as the incidents of 20 and 21 May as reported by the SMM in its spot reports. We urge all sides to respect the SMM’s mandate which calls for full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine including along the Ukrainian-Russian border and on the Crimean peninsula, and to halt all targeting and obstruction of their technical equipment. Unfortunately, restrictions to the SMM’s freedom of movement, as well as targeting of SMM UAVs with small arms fire and

signal jamming continued over the past week. And the SMM continued to face impediments to its work again mostly in non-government controlled areas: in the period of 7-13 May the SMM was hampered in its work in 15 out of 17 instances in non-government controlled areas and the systematic denial of its access to the uncontrolled Ukrainian-Russian state border persisted. This is unacceptable and must stop.

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.

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 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, 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.