



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation No 806 Vienna, 9 December 2015

EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States are deeply concerned about the continued volatile and tense situation in eastern Ukraine with varying number of ceasefire violations. In these fragile circumstances with a risk of escalation, we once again underline the need to consolidate the ceasefire and to fully implement the Minsk agreements, in order to achieve a sustainable political settlement of the conflict, based on full respect for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.

We urge all sides to abide by their commitments in accordance with the Addendum on withdrawal of smaller calibre weapons. Likewise, we continue to urge for full and unconditional withdrawal of heavy weapons in accordance with the Minsk Package of Measures, accompanied by an efficient verification mechanism. In this context, we welcome the provision by the Ukrainian Armed Forces and by some Russia-backed separatists of an inventory of heavy weapons. However, we stress the fact that it has to be completed by fully including the final location of storage sites. We urge that such information is provided for the whole territory of eastern Ukraine not under Ukrainian government control. We also appreciate that according to SMM reports an order by the chief-of staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces on 25 November not to return fire, unless in self-defence, and observance of this order by checkpoint commanders, was a possible contributing factor for a drop in the number of ceasefire violation incidents. We urge the Russia-backed separatists to follow this positive example and thus deliver on their side in order to contribute to efforts towards the peaceful settlement of the conflict. We are disturbed by the presence and movement of weapons within and beyond withdrawal lines, as reported by the SMM. All heavy weapons must be withdrawn and foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and call on Russia to use its considerable influence over separatists to meet their commitments.

We greatly value the role played by the SMM in providing us with objective and impartial information regarding the situation on the ground. We are therefore deeply concerned by

reports about the intimidation of monitors and the restrictions placed on SMM's access in separatist controlled areas. Not only have separatists denied access to the SMM and restricted their freedom of movement on many occasions, they went so far as to demand the removal of two monitors from areas that they control. We also condemn in the strongest terms the threatening of monitors by separatists as reported on 5 December in a SMM spot report. Such serious intimidation and the hampering of SMM's work are unacceptable. We are furthermore deeply concerned that because of continued impediments in the freedom of movement of monitors, the SMM remains unable to monitor large parts of areas along the international Russian-Ukrainian state border controlled by separatists.

Mr. Chairman, the Russian Federation has called many times in this Forum for an increase in the number of monitors and for strengthened efforts to allow for 24/7 monitoring of the contact line. However, the SMM has not yet been provided with the necessary security guarantees from the separatists in order to open a number of additional forward patrol bases. This restricts the SMM's operational scope and reach, thereby limiting the mission's expansion as well as its ability to monitor and report in a balanced and efficient manner. We urge that the SMM's request is met.

We remain concerned about mine-related incidents and reiterate our call on the security working group of the Trilateral Contact Group to urgently agree to a framework on mine action.

We deeply regret that so-called 'humanitarian convoys' from Russia continue to enter Ukrainian territory without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities in clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as without fundamental international humanitarian principles being observed.

Mr Chairman, we recall our unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and call upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to strictly observe 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 Crimea and Sevastopol by 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 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.