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EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 997
Vienna, 28 April 2014**

**EU Statement on the Current Security Challenges in the
OSCE Area and OSCE Engagement with Ukraine**

The EU and its Member States are deeply concerned that the situation continues to deteriorate in the Eastern part of Ukraine with numerous reports of kidnappings, torture and killings carried out by armed groups in a number of cities. Intimidation and provocative actions and statements are continuing, public buildings are still occupied and the media freedom situation is alarming. We are also gravely concerned about the build-up of Russian troops right next to the Ukrainian border with exercises being carried out. We reiterate our demand to Russia to call back its troops and cease any actions aimed at destabilising Ukraine.

Last Friday's abduction of a group of impartial and unarmed military inspectors from OSCE participating States and their Ukrainian hosts conducting an OSCE Vienna Document inspection is an attack not only on this group but on the overall OSCE and other diplomatic efforts in Ukraine. It is also a challenge to the Vienna Document and the confidence and security building efforts of this Organisation. The inspectors and their hosts must be released immediately and unconditionally. We call on the Russian Federation to use its influence on the separatists and assist with the release of the inspectors, and at the highest political level to publicly call for their release. Yesterday's public presentation of the inspectors and their Ukrainian hosts as prisoners is offensive, violates their dignity and is in breach of all international standards that apply to such situations. We commend the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission for its rapid deployment to Sloviansk and its mediation efforts, and welcome the release of one of the inspectors.

We also call for the release of all other persons being illegally detained by armed groups in Eastern Ukraine, whether journalists, local leaders or ordinary citizens.

The Joint Geneva Statement gave hope for de-escalation and for restoring security for all citizens. Instead, we are witnessing the opposite as clearly illustrated in the reports of the Special Monitoring Mission. In this regard, we agree with the statement of the Chair-in-office that the detention of unarmed military inspectors goes against the spirit of the Joint Geneva Statement. We have full confidence in Ukraine's government to implement the Joint Geneva Statement and recognise Ukraine's right to take legitimate action to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Ukrainian government has taken several substantive steps to fulfil Geneva pledges which we welcome. In contrast, Russia has as yet not shown public political support for the effective and faithful implementation of the Joint Geneva Statement. The Russian Federation has taken no concrete action in this regard. All parties to the Statement must ensure that its terms are fully implemented, including by using their leverage on illegal armed groups to stop violence, kidnappings and provocations and to make them hand in their arms. Time is of the essence if we are to avoid a further deterioration.

We welcome the engagement of the Special Monitoring Mission and its valuable role in assisting with the implementation of the measures agreed in the Joint Geneva Statement. We encourage the Mission to continue reporting in a timely, explicit and transparent manner, and to continue its extensive public reporting. We commend the Mission for its mediation and dialogue facilitation. We note with concern the incidents that have occurred regarding security and access for OSCE staff and cases of detention and abduction. We once again call for all OSCE representatives to be allowed safe and free access throughout Ukraine, within its internationally recognised borders, to fulfil their mandate.

The EU and its Member States continue to support an expansion of the Mission to draw on its full potential and acknowledge the need to provide monitors with the necessary qualifications and extra budgetary funding. The EU is looking into ways of further increasing the EU contribution and in-kind support. 30 vehicles will be delivered shortly.

We commend the Representative on Freedom of the Media for her pertinent statements on the media freedom situation in Ukraine and her active engagement

in Ukraine. This is what we expect from her and we believe her efforts are fully in line with her mandate. We therefore deeply regret the Russian Foreign Ministry's attempt to politicise and call into question the work of the Representative on Freedom of the Media in its statement on 23 April. We also regret the Russian MFA's baseless accusations against ODIHR in its statement on 18 April.

The European Union reiterates its strong support for Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, and calls upon Russia to do so as well. 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 the moves it has made that go against these principles. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and will not recognise it.

Finally, the EU recalls the Council Conclusions of 14 April stating that any further steps by the Russian Federation to destabilise the situation in Ukraine would lead to additional and far reaching consequences for relations in a broad range of economic areas between the European Union and its Member States, on the one hand, and the Russian Federation, on the other hand. In line with these Conclusions, the EU will move swiftly to impose additional sanctions on Russia as also agreed by the G7 on 26 April.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidates ALBANIA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.