



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°854 Vienna, 24 May 2017

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States are deeply concerned that the security situation in eastern Ukraine is again deteriorating. Against the background of limited monitoring following the tragic incident of 23rd April, the SMM has recorded in the period of 8 – 14 May a sharp increase of 75 per cent in ceasefire violations, a significant increase in violence along the contact line and in the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons. This highly disturbing trend resulted in the killing and injuring of civilians on both sides of the contact line. Regrettably, the SMM has confirmed 205 civilian casualties in 2017. We therefore again urge all sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect for the ceasefire, the withdrawal of Minsk-proscribed weapons, complete disengagement and comprehensive mine action.

Mr. Chairman, on 17 May an SMM patrol was once again threatened by separatists in a non-government controlled area. In this incident near Dokuchaievsk, one man of a group of six wearing military-style clothes threw a smoke-generating device in front of one of the SMM vehicles. This is merely the latest in a series of incidents of aggressive intimidation, harassment and hostility towards the SMM and its monitors in non-government controlled areas. We condemn the systematic nature of such impediments as well as the continuing negative and hostile rhetoric against the SMM in separatist-held areas. These consistent attempts to undermine the SMM, and the impunity with which they are carried out, are unacceptable. In this context, we are appalled by the attempts to downplay these incidents, such as in relation to the sexual harassment of a monitor on 5 May, which was referred to by separatists as a "bad joke" or explained as a "conflict of cultures". Equally, we are deeply concerned by the written instructions given to separatists to hinder and block the SMM patrols by for example denying SMM passage unless they are on "planned routes". Such statements are an expression of disrespect for the SMM and in violation of its

mandate and we call on all pS to join us in condemning such behaviour. We repeat that the SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine and we urge Russia to exercise its influence over the separatists it backs to put an end to these unacceptable restrictions and intimidation and to ensure accountability. Without proper and unimpeded monitoring by the SMM, no objective reporting will be possible, which constitutes the basis for a credible and verified improvement of the security situation, paramount for further progress on the political track of the peace process. We expect all sides to live up to their responsibility to mark, fence and clear areas contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance, and we once again underline the need for the JCCC to fulfil its coordination role as laid out in the TCG decision on mine clearance.

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, 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 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.