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S T A T E M E N T

by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the developments in Ukraine's Crimea

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, issued the following statement today:

"I deplore today's decision by Russia on the use of armed forces in Ukraine. This is an unwarranted escalation of tensions. I therefore call upon the Russian Federation not to dispatch such troops, but to promote its views through peaceful means.

Any possible movements, action and stationing of forces must be in accordance with international law and commitments, notably under the UN Charter and the OSCE Final Act, the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 as well as bilateral treaties such as the one regulating the stationing of the Black Sea Fleet.

I call on all sides to decrease the tensions immediately through dialogue, in full respect of Ukrainian and international law. The unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine must be respected at all times and by all sides. Any violation of these principles is unacceptable. More than ever, restraint and sense of responsibility are needed.

I commend the measured response by the transitional government of Ukraine to these extremely worrying developments in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea over the last few days.

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An extraordinary meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council will be held on Monday to discuss the EU's response to these developments. I will also meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov thereafter. I will travel to Kyiv on Wednesday to address these issues with all stakeholders."
