



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°848 Vienna, 15 March 2017

EU Statement on the security situation in and around Ukraine

Mr. Chairman, this week, three years have passed since the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation. The European Union and its Member States reiterate that they do not recognise it and continue to condemn strongly this violation of international law as well as the principles and commitments of the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter. 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 remain deeply concerned by the highly volatile security situation along the line of contact, marked by continued fierce fighting in hotspots, further humanitarian strife and casualties. The constant high level of shelling, as well as increased use of artillery, mortars and multiple-launch-rocket systems are deeply worrying developments which at the same time represent a flagrant violation of existing agreements. We therefore again call on all sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect of the ceasefire, the withdrawal of all Minsk-proscribed weapons and complete disengagement. These are important steps toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these fundamental principles must be restored.

We express our deep concern as the SMM has issued three spot reports in as many weeks reporting on incidents that have put the lives of monitors at risk. In particular we strongly condemn the firing of 82 mm mortar rounds on 10 March into “DPR”-controlled Pikuzy very close to the SMM personnel who were monitoring the adherence of a local ceasefire agreed upon to allow for repair works. We condemn

any restrictions to the SMM's work and deplore incidents that risk the safety and security of SMM monitors, noting that these mostly take place in areas not controlled by the Ukrainian government. Repeated hostile actions of armed men in these areas seriously undermine the work of the Mission. We urge the JCCC to take adequate steps to hold to account the individuals involved in recent violent incidents, including those in Yasynuvata and Khreshchatytske. We reiterate that the SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, in particular to the disengagement areas and also along the Ukrainian-Russian State border. In this context, we are concerned that the SMM's freedom of movement was restricted on two separate occasions in areas not under the control of the Ukrainian government in Luhansk for the first time in 2017 – on 28 February in Izvaryne and on 5 March near Leonove – as reported by the SMM. Such restrictions prevent the Mission from gathering a full picture of the situation on the ground.

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, including sophisticated and specialised military equipment that continues to demonstrate that the Russian Federation is indeed a party to the conflict. We call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists and to immediately withdraw its military equipment and personnel from the territory of Ukraine. 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.

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 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.