



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°809 Vienna, 27 January 2016

EU Statement on the Security Situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States remain deeply concerned about the volatile and tense situation in eastern Ukraine. We regret that ceasefire violations continued despite previous agreements within the Trilateral Contact Group. We note with concern in particular SMM reports about the use of heavy weapons and Addendum-regulated weapons which should have been withdrawn. 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. We are disturbed about the presence and movement of proscribed weapons in the security zone. We are deeply concerned that a considerable number of weapons remain undeclared and unverified, particularly in separatist-controlled areas, as reported by the SMM.

We deplore that the SMM continues to experience freedom of movement restrictions, mostly in areas controlled by Russia-backed separatists, including alongside the Russian-Ukrainian state border. We underline that freedom of movement is indispensable to the SMM to fully perform its role as foreseen in the Minsk Package and the Addendum and to fulfil its mandate as tasked by the OSCE Permanent Council.

We commend the SMM for its continued focus on the prioritized areas for demining work. We welcome that demining was completed in two out of twelve priority areas. We are also encouraged by the agreement within the Trilateral Contact Group last week to clean the remaining areas by 21 March. We call on all sides to adhere to agreements reached at political level in order to allow for progress on the ground.

Mr. Chairman, we remain firm in our call on all parties to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and to honour their commitments. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and also again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet their commitments. The ceasefire must be respected. 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 remain concerned about reports regarding the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia.

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, 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.