



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Special Permanent Council No 1064 Vienna, 19 August 2015

EU Statement in Response to SMM Chief Monitor Apakan

The European Union warmly welcomes SMM Chief Monitor Apakan back to the Permanent Council. We remain fully supportive of the SMM's impartial and objective reporting and its efforts to de-escalate the crisis in and around Ukraine.

Mr Chairman, today's meeting is very timely given the escalation of fighting in parts of eastern Ukraine as a result of attacks on Starohnativka, Sartana, and other government-controlled areas, with several casualties, including civilians. We would like to hear more about Ambassador Apakan's assessment of the situation. We are also deeply concerned about information of heavy fighting near Donetsk. This violates the spirit and the letter of the Minsk agreements. All appropriate measures to protect civilians must be taken in full respect of international humanitarian law. The Minsk agreements must be fully implemented in good faith based on OSCE principles and commitments, starting with full observation of the ceasefire and genuine withdrawal of heavy weapons. Foreign armed formations, military equipment as well as mercenaries must be removed from the territory of Ukraine. We underline the Russian authorities' responsibility in this regard. We also expect Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists to meet their Minsk commitments in full. We expect further progress in the talks within the Trilateral Contact Group of Ukraine, Russia, and the OSCE Chairmanship and its subordinate working groups, allowing for complete implementation of the Minsk Agreements within the agreed timeframe by the end of the year.

The safety of SMM monitors remains of paramount importance. We are deeply concerned that the recent escalation of fighting has coincided with several incidents which have threatened the SMM and its work. This includes the monitors caught in cross-fire in Shchastya and Shyrokyne, reports of aggressive and threatening

behaviour towards SMM monitors, and the arson attack on SMM vehicles in separatist-controlled Donetsk on 9 August. We strongly condemn all restrictions, threats and attacks on the SMM. This endangers the crucial role that the SMM plays in monitoring and verifying the implementation of the Minsk agreements, which is the basis for a sustainable solution of the conflict in full respect of Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We welcome the mitigating measures which the SMM has taken in response to recent incidents. All sides have been reminded again of their responsibilities and we stress the importance of this message being clearly articulated through all levels of command, in particular to personnel at checkpoints.

We are deeply concerned that the SMM's access continues to be restricted despite repeated commitments to ensure the freedom of movement of the SMM made by all sides. We note in particular that access remains fully or partly restricted in parts of separatist-controlled territory. The systematic jamming of SMM UAVs is unacceptable. We call on all sides to ensure safe, full and unhindered access for SMM monitors and UAVs to all parts of Ukraine, including to the Crimean peninsula and along the border with Russia. We also once again call on all parties to provide the SMM with the full baseline information that would allow for verification of the withdrawal of heavy weapons. We would be grateful if the Chief Monitor could elaborate on how he aims to improve the SMM's communication strategy to mitigate the risk of incidents with the local population and deliberate misrepresentation of the SMM's role and mandate.

We commend the efforts of the SMM to facilitate local ceasefires and demilitarisation on the ground, including the facilitation of repair work on water infrastructure between Maiorsk and Horlivka. We also commend the efforts of the SMM Chief Monitor as coordinator of the working group on security under the Trilateral Contact Group. We regret that final agreement has not been reached on the concrete proposals discussed in the working group. We call on all sides to strengthen their efforts and to show the necessary political will to allow for concrete results at the next meeting which should take place as soon as possible.

The European Union welcomes the invitation by the Ukrainian government for OSCE/ODIHR to monitor local elections in Ukraine. ODIHR has issued a budget

revision proposal, which aims at providing for the necessary financial means to monitor local elections according to Verkhovna Rada decision of 17 July, as well as in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions as foreseen in the Minsk agreements. It is imperative that a decision is taken now, so that election monitoring in accordance with OSCE standards can take place. At the same time, we hope that talks in the political working group under the Trilateral Contact Group, scheduled for today, will bring progress concerning the local elections to be held in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

We continue to regret that so-called 'humanitarian convoys' from Russia continue to enter Ukrainian territory, without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities and in clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and without fundamental international humanitarian principles being observed. We note with concern a pattern of intensified military activities of the separatists, usually following the arrival of the so-called 'humanitarian convoys' from Russia.

Mr Chairman, the EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. 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 moves that contravene these principles. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and we will not recognise it.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries LIECHTENSTEIN 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.

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