



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°898
Vienna, 7 November 2018**

EU Statement on the Security situation in and around Ukraine

The European Union and its Member States strongly condemn the downing of an SMM long-range UAV in the middle of the night on 27 October near Nyzhnokrynske, an area held by Russia-backed armed formations. In its preliminary assessment, the SMM concluded that the most likely cause of the downing was an impact to the UAV and that eight people heard an explosion in the area around the time of the incident. Moreover, the downing followed shortly after the spotting by the UAV of a surface-to-air missile system 9K33 Osa, as well as yet another convoy of seven trucks driving toward Manych on a dirt road near the border with the Russian Federation where there are no border crossing facilities. These facts suggest Russia and the armed formations it backs bear responsibility for the incident and demand an explanation by the Russian Federation. We underline that any interference with SMM technical equipment goes against the letter and spirit of the Minsk agreements. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

Madame Chairperson, this incident has also to be seen against the background of continued, systematic restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement, occurring predominantly in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations, and constraints to the SMM's proper monitoring of the situation along the uncontrolled Ukrainian-Russian state border. In a situation where the Russian Federation continues to oppose a substantial expansion of the OSCE Border Observation Mission and where Russia-backed armed formations systematically deny the SMM access to certain areas of the international border, the SMM's technological equipment, and particularly the long-range UAVs, has proven to be an invaluable source of information about the situation on the ground. Since 7 August 2018, the SMM long-range UAVs have observed convoys of trucks on seven occasions on the same unpaved road in the area near the Russian border. Despite queries in this Forum, we have not received any credible explanation by the Russian

delegation which could dispel concerns about the possible military nature of the cargo being transported.

We are deeply concerned about the negative consequences of the conflict on the civilian population living in the vicinity of the line of contact who face threats to their lives and damage to their property and critical infrastructure. The SMM facilitated and monitored the recovery of two bodies of a man and a woman killed on 18 October in an explosion between Zolote-4 and Zolote-5. In Marinka, on 21 October, a man was struck in his right leg by a small-arms bullet while repairing the roof of his house. On 23 October in Zalizne, two Voda Donbassa employees were injured in an explosion when conducting repair works. We deeply regret these incidents and condemn any actions that further aggravate civilian hardship in the conflict zone.

We are also concerned about the SMM's observation of the sides moving closer together, as the proximity of forces goes hand in hand with increased levels of armed violence. We note in this context, that on 21 October, on two occasions - near non-government controlled Stavky and Horlivka - the SMM observed positions of the Russia-backed armed formations moving further west. We reiterate our call on all sides to disengage, withdraw heavy weapons and step up efforts on comprehensive mine action, in order to ensure a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire as an important step toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

Madame Chairperson, on 25 October, the 80th Russian Convoy entered Ukrainian territory at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point, as reported by the OSCE Observer Mission. We deeply regret that, once again, this happened without a full inspection by the Ukrainian border guards and in violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. This does little to allay concerns about the possible military nature of the transported cargo.

We remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full in order to achieve a sustainable political solution to the conflict in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and once again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations 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 armed formations. 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 within its internationally recognised borders, and call 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 stabilising the situation and reversing moves that contravene these principles. We strongly condemn the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces since February 2014 and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, which we will not recognise. We express our deep concern about the ongoing large-scale militarisation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia, which continues to impact the security situation in the Black Sea region and beyond.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA 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.