



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1242 Vienna, 3 October 2019

EU Statement in response to the Report by the Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk, Ambassador Gyorgy Varga

Ambassador Varga, the EU welcomes you to the Permanent Council and thanks you for your report. We commend you and your team for your hard work to implement the mandate of the Observer Mission.

The border monitoring on the Russian-Ukrainian state border is of vital importance. Effective and comprehensive monitoring of this border is an integral part of a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments, which re-establishes full Ukrainian control over its sovereign territory, including the border. We recall that the Minsk Protocol calls for permanent monitoring of the border and verification by the OSCE and that the Minsk Package of Measures includes a commitment to reinstate full Ukrainian control over its entire international border. In a context where the SMM is systematically denied access to large parts of the Ukraine-Russia border, the work of your mission becomes even more important.

In your report, you underline that the freedom of movement of the observer teams within the border checkpoints continues to be restricted while the use of observation tools such as binoculars or cameras remains prohibited. These restrictions lead to blind spots, as you say, for the observer teams, which we deeply regret. We call on

the Russian Federation as the host country to remove any restrictions to the mission's work immediately.

We also reiterate our call for a significant expansion of the Mission to all border crossings on the Russia-Ukraine state border currently not under control of the Ukrainian government as well as between these border crossings. The mandate of the mission is currently very limited and its small size does not provide for comprehensive border monitoring. The limitations put on your work together with the systematic denial of access to certain border areas by Russia-backed armed formations raise clear concerns about what is being hidden from the international community.

We note the decision of the Permanent Council of last month to extend the Observer Mission by a further period of four months. We acknowledge that the shortness of every mandate cycle puts administrative burdens on you and your team. We would support, in line with Ambassador Varga, an extension of the mandate cycle for a longer period ensuring a more stable functioning of the Mission and increasing its continuity.

We welcome the exchange of information between the Observer Mission and the SMM and we encourage the continuation of this practice and the further development of the cooperation between the two Missions.

We regret that so-called "humanitarian convoys" continue to enter into Ukrainian territory without consent from the Ukrainian government. In the reporting period between 28 May and 17 September, the OM observed one Russian convoy that crossed via the Donetsk border checkpoint on 25 July and another convoy on 19 September, after the current reporting period. We are thankful for the SPOT reports you release concerning this violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We recall that the Minsk agreements foresee that humanitarian aid will be delivered through an international mechanism.

Finally, we would be grateful if you could share plans for the upcoming activities of the Mission.

Thank you.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH 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, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.