



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1232 Vienna, 13 June 2019

EU Statement in response to the Chief Monitor of BOM, Ambassador György Varga

The European Union welcomes Ambassador György Varga to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his report. We commend you, Ambassador, and your team for your hard work to implement the mandate of the Observer Mission.

Mr. Chairman, 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. Such a sustainable political solution must re-establish 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 as part of the foreseen sequence of security and political steps.

In your report, you underline that the freedom of movement of the observer teams inside the border checkpoints continues to be restricted while the use of observation tools such as binoculars or cameras remains strictly prohibited. These restrictions, imposed by the Russian Federal Security Service, create “blind spots” at the two Border Checkpoints, as you say in your report, which we deeply regret.

We also regret that the Russian Federation continues to resist an expansion of the Mission. We 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 the uncontrolled Ukraine-Russia state border by Russia-backed armed formations raise serious concerns about what is being hidden from the international community.

In this context, we thank the Chairmanship for organising the informal meeting on ways to improve transparency along the Ukrainian-Russian state border yesterday and encourage the continuation of this practice. We acknowledge that the shortness of every mandate cycle puts administrative burdens on you and your team. We agree with you Ambassador Varga that an extension of the mandate cycle of the mission for a longer period could ensure a more stable functioning of the Mission. We call on Russia to agree to a Memorandum of Understanding in order to facilitate the work of the Mission.

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.

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*, 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.