

**Mr. President,**

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the Council about the current situation in Ukraine.

The Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) has since April operated throughout Ukraine, and implemented the tasks such as monitoring human rights and basic freedoms, establishing facts and reporting thereon. This mandate has also included dialogue and facilitation especially at the regional level. The Mission has been designed as a civilian observer mission with a political mandate which has been approved by 57 participating States. The SMM adopted itself right from the start to a fast changing environment.

We welcome the Minsk documents and the efforts to implement a ceasefire. In recent days, however the level of violence in eastern Ukraine and the risk of further escalation remain high.

We have observed continuing fighting in many locations of Luhansk and Donetsk regions. Artillery and mortar shelling often hit residential areas, causing casualties amongst the civilian population. Our monitors have on three separate occasions observed convoys of unmarked trucks, heavy weapons, tanks in areas controlled by armed groups.

The ability of the SMM to monitor the implementation of the Minsk documents including ceasefire monitoring poses considerable security and operational challenges on the SMM. It has necessitated expansion of the mission to the maximum of 500 monitors in accordance with our mandate. The Mission currently consists of 266 international Mission Members from 42 participating States. Out of these, 170 are deployed in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

**Mr President,**

We have been communicating with all those involved in the processes related to the Minsk Protocol and Memorandum, including the Trilateral Contact Group, Ukrainian authorities, representatives of the General Staffs of Ukraine and Russia engaged in the JCCC, as well as “representatives of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk”.

I have been in regular contact with my distinguished colleague Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine.

A security zone and a Contact Line would be established by the Minsk Memorandum to serve as a reference point for the withdrawal of military personnel and equipment. This has not been accomplished yet.

JCCC is a bilateral Ukrainian-Russian initiative and entirely separate from SMM. However, the SMM will continue to do what it can to help. However, strong political will is needed to make this structure work.

Part of implementing the Minsk Documents also is to secure the Ukrainian-Russian state border. The SMM has been at the border when access and the security situation allowed, and OSCE stands ready to expand its border monitoring. The stretch of the border beyond control of Ukrainian forces is around 400 kilometres long.

In order to increase its monitoring capability, the SMM has deployed civilian UAVs. Since the UAVs started operating flight on 28 October, they have encountered jamming twice and have been shot at once.

**Mr President,**

Now I would like to emphasise the heavy toll, which this conflict is taking on the civilian population.

There are more than 430.000 Internally Displaced Persons inside Ukraine including those from Crimea. This deepens the humanitarian crisis, particularly as winter approaches.

**Mr President,**

President Poroshenko's Peace Plan and the Minsk Documents provide a framework and a roadmap for normalization and a stable and pluralistic Ukraine. The Parliamentary elections of 26 October have brought about a new, positive atmosphere.

The SMM will continue to facilitate the dialogue on the ground in order to reduce tensions and promote normalization of the situation. This dialogue will foster the empowerment of the civil society and women.

The SMM will continue to cooperate with the United Nations including UN DPA, UNHCR, UNDP and UN Women.

The security environment remains a significant constraint. The SMM conducts constant co-ordination with all involved to ensure proper security for its personnel.

The SMM's access and freedom of movement remain obstructed particularly in areas such as Horlivka and south of Debaltseve and in some other border regions. The Minsk Protocol and Memorandum do not introduce limitations to its activities, geographically or otherwise.

The SMM will continue to monitor the situation in all of Ukraine including in the two eastern regions. In Eastern Ukraine, SMM will monitor not only the Security Zone, but also the entire regions of Luhansk and Donetsk up to and at the state border between Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

While the SMM continues to facilitate initiatives put forward to reduce tensions and fostering peace, a sustainable ceasefire can only be reached by all involved.

Once again we need de-escalation and maximum restraint. The SMM will continue with its impartial monitoring and independent and objective reporting.

We urge all concerned to urgently commit to full implementation of the Minsk Documents, designed to bring peace and stability to Ukraine.