



All sides in eastern Ukraine have a responsibility to ensure the safety of OSCE monitors and guarantee their unfettered access across the region, the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Serbia's Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić said today following two recent incidents in which teams from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) were caught in fire exchanges.

"I am alarmed and deeply concerned by the incidents in Shchastia on 26 July and Shyrokyne on 27 July, especially when it appears our unarmed, civilian monitors were targeted," said Dačić.

He said that an SMM monitor who suffered a mild concussion and an injury to his right leg in the incident in Shyrokyne, had now been discharged from hospital.

"I commend the bravery and diligence that monitors and staff of the SMM show every day in their work in increasingly difficult circumstances. I strongly condemn any incidents or actions that hamper the SMM's work.

"All sides on the ground in eastern Ukraine are obliged under their commitments to the Minsk Agreements to ensure the safety, security and freedom of movement of the SMM."

Dačić also reminded all sides of the urgent need to fully implement the ceasefire, to continue and enhance the withdrawal of heavy weapons, and to step up the political dialogue, in line with the Minsk Agreements.

"The OSCE is the only organization that can monitor the security situation and verify the withdrawal of heavy weapons in a credible manner with the aim of de-escalating and normalising the situation on the ground," said Dačić. "All sides have an obligation to support the OSCE's efforts and to continue work on a political process towards ending the deadly cycle of violence."

*Photo by: OSCE/Micky Kroell*