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Press release | 22.07.2014

Russia/Ukraine

EU must prioritise closure of Ukrainian-Russian border

Commenting on the outcome of today's meeting of EU foreign affairs ministers and on the EU's future approach to the Ukraine crisis, Greens/EFA co-president **Rebecca Harms** stated:

"Given the events of the last few days and the horror of the shooting down of flight MH17, it is incomprehensible and disappointing that the EU foreign affairs ministers have again failed to send a clear message to Moscow. The Commission was once again tasked with coming up with the actual proposals, which leaves it open as to which measures the EU is ready to take.

"The shooting down of flight MH17 and the heavy fighting in Donetsk, Lugansk and other places in eastern Ukraine are the result of unhindered entry into Ukraine of modern military weaponry, fighters and money from Russia. Effective control of the Russian-Ukrainian border is needed to stop this supply and is key to the resolution of this conflict in parts of eastern Ukraine.

"Already at the June EU summit, Putin was called on to close within three days the Russian side of the border to arms and fighters, to ensure the return of three Ukrainian border posts to Ukrainian control and to accept OSCE monitoring. EU leaders threatened new sanctions for non-compliance. Two weeks later, in Rio de Janeiro, Putin promised Merkel that he would give the go-ahead to an expansion of the OSCE mission on the border, but no action has yet been taken. Instead, there are numerous reports of increasing movements, including in the aftermath of the shooting down of flight MH17, of heavy weaponry from Russia to Donetsk and Lugansk.

"Bilateral approaches where the interests of individual member states take precedence over the common EU interest are irresponsible. It is crucial that EU member states work together on a common strategy in order to effectively address this crisis. Effective closure of the borders to movements of weaponry must be made an absolute priority. If the Russian government and leader refuse to cooperate, there should be a significant shift in EU policy towards Russia. However, currently, all non-military means possible must be used in order to neutralise the destabilisation strategy which is dragging Ukraine ever further into conflict."

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Rebecca Harms

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