



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1303 Vienna, 18 February 2021

EU Statement on “Russia’s Ongoing Aggression against Ukraine and Illegal Occupation of Crimea”

Madam Chair, the EU places high value on our cooperation with Ukraine. This was highlighted during the 7th EU-Ukraine Association Council on 11 February when the EU reiterated its unwavering support and commitment to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. The Association Council condemned the violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by the Russian armed forces and reconfirmed its support for a peaceful and sustainable political solution. The EU reaffirmed its policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol by Russia, including through restrictive measures.

As was also stressed during the Association Council, the EU calls on the sides to implement the Minsk agreements, which consist of the Minsk Protocol of 5 September 2014, the Minsk Memorandum of 19 September 2014 and the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015. We underline Russia's responsibility as a signatory of the Minsk agreements and urge Russia to implement the provisions that it has committed itself to.

We strongly support the work of the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group. In this context, we commend France and Germany for their role as mediators in the Normandy Format and the OSCE for its mediation role within the TCG. The CiO Special Representative Heidi Grau, SMM Chief Monitor Yaşar Halit Çevik and all the coordinators of the working groups have our full support in their important task

of facilitating the implementation of the Minsk agreements. We call on Russia, as party to both of these formats, to act constructively in the negotiations. We also urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to operationalise the Zolote and Shchastia entry-exit check points (EECPs), to open all currently closed EECPs, and to move forward with the demining of the nineteen areas as agreed in the TCG. Such actions would improve the humanitarian situation at the contact line and to allow for progress in the rehabilitation of economic ties.

We note that the ceasefire agreement is largely holding, but we deplore that the spikes in violations and sniper activity have resulted in casualties in military personnel. Only last week, five Ukrainian soldiers were killed due to sniper fire and explosions. We call on both sides to do their utmost in order to keep the agreement intact and once again urge the Russian Federation to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to make sure that the ceasefire is fully respected.

Madam Chair, in accordance with its mandate, the SMM should have unhindered access to the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. This includes the illegally annexed Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and along the whole Ukraine-Russia state border. All signatories of the Minsk agreements, including Russia, have agreed on the need to ensure the SMM safe and secure access and that any restriction of their freedom of movement deserves a rapid response. We deplore any attempts to harass, intimidate or impede the work of the SMM and its monitors and condemn the continued restrictions and recent attacks on SMM UAVs, which occur overwhelmingly in non-government-controlled areas.

The European Union condemns the ongoing militarization of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation and the presence of Russian troops as being contrary to the national sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We regret the build-up of forces and the holding of Russian military exercises in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov and we are deeply concerned about the transfers of advanced weapon systems including nuclear-capable aircraft and missiles, weapons, ammunition and military personnel to the territory of Ukraine as well as the illegal seizure and establishment of control by Russia over the former nuclear weapons storage sites in Crimea. We call on Russia to refrain from unlawful military activities in Crimea, the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, which further exacerbate tensions in the region and beyond.

The EU remains firm in its call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full in order to achieve a sustainable political solution to the conflict in line with the OSCE principles and commitments. We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility in this regard and to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. We again call on Russia to immediately stop fueling the conflict by providing financial and military support to the armed formations, and we remain deeply concerned about the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations. The duration of the European Union's sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to uphold these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilising the situation and reversing moves that contravene these principles. We strongly condemn the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces since February 2014 and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, which we will not recognise. The European Union will remain committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

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 and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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