



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1154
Vienna, 13 July 2017**

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

The security situation remains volatile, marked by spikes in heavy fighting with Minsk-proscribed weapons, exacerbating the dire humanitarian situation. As each week passes, the SMM documents further civilian casualties and severe damage to civilian infrastructure. As noted by deputy Chief Monitor Hug, a direct hit on the Donetsk Water Filtration Station could release chlorine into the area, leading to an ecological and humanitarian disaster. We are also deeply concerned by the continued build-up of heavy weapons close to the line of contact. We therefore again call on all sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect of the ceasefire, the withdrawal of all Minsk-proscribed weapons, complete disengagement and to ensure comprehensive mine action. Full humanitarian access to areas held by Russia-backed separatists must also be ensured, in line with international humanitarian principles. These are important steps towards a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these fundamental principles must be restored.

The SMM continues to face regular, deliberate and callous intimidation and restrictions in separatist-held areas. This is unacceptable. The security of the SMM is the responsibility of those in effective control of the area in which the SMM operates. We urge Russia to exercise its influence over the separatists it backs to put an end to the restrictions and intimidation and to ensure accountability. The SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including to the Ukraine-Russia state border. Without proper and unimpeded monitoring by the SMM, there cannot be a verified improvement of the security situation, which is the basis for further progress on the political track.

The sides in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups must agree on steps toward the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. This includes the modalities of local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in full accordance with Ukrainian legislation and OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. We reiterate our firm position that established conditions for ODIHR monitoring, including ensuring security and access, must first be met.

We remain firm in our 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 in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility and to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. We again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists, and we remain deeply concerned about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in separatist-held areas. The duration of the European Union's economic 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 recognise these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilise the situation and reverse moves that contravene these principles. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and we will not recognise it. The European Union will remain committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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