



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1162
Vienna, 2 November 2017**

**EU statement on “Russia’s Ongoing Aggression Against
Ukraine and Illegal Annexation of Crimea”**

Chairperson, on October 25, an SMM patrol was stopped by armed men at a checkpoint in an area held by Russia-backed separatists north-east of Mariupol and separatists deliberately and repeatedly pointed a loaded heavy machine gun at the SMM vehicle at very short range. We are alarmed that such direct threats against the SMM monitors take place and we urge Russia to exercise its influence over the separatists it backs to put an end to restrictions and intimidation. Assurances by the Russian delegation and in the Trilateral Contact Group that steps are being taken to ensure the safety of monitors in separatist-held areas are contradicted by the reality that monitors continue to face on the ground. The SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including to the Ukraine-Russia state border, and it is high time that those responsible are brought to justice. Impunity is not acceptable for such actions.

Unfortunately, as also noted by Ambassador Sadjik in his press statement after the Meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group on October 27, we are once again seeing a significant increase in the number of ceasefire violations. This has severe consequences especially for civilians and we strongly condemn these continued violations and call on all sides to recommit to the ceasefire.

On October 26 the sixty-eighth so-called humanitarian convoy passed through at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point from Russia into Ukrainian territory. This occurs without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities and in clear violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and without fundamental international humanitarian principles being observed. The Minsk package foresees that humanitarian aid will be delivered through an international

mechanism. An agreement on this in the humanitarian working group remains crucial.

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. Respect for these fundamental principles must be restored. We once again 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 and to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists. 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.

We note the fact that the Crimean Tatar leaders Ilmi Umerov and Akhtem Chiygoz were freed on 25 October. They were both arrested and sentenced by Russia for their opposition to the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol. We are pleased that they can now reunite with their families. Nevertheless we must not lose sight of the many others, including other Crimean Tatars, who continue to be illegally detained by the non-recognised Russian "authorities". We continue to condemn the illegal detentions and call once again for the immediate release of all Ukrainian political prisoners on the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula and in Russia.

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 LIECHTENSTEIN, 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.