



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1073
Vienna, 29 October 2015**

**EU Statement on Russia's Ongoing Aggression against
Ukraine and Violations of OSCE principles and
Commitments**

The European Union continues to draw a measure of cautious optimism from the relative calm along the line of contact. But although the ceasefire is largely holding, the situation on the ground remains tense with reported isolated incidents, which have involved casualties. We urge all sides to take further steps without delay to consolidate the fragile gains and to move towards a sustainable political settlement in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

We welcome the progress in implementing the withdrawal agreement of 29 September. We reiterate that any delay in the provision or the manipulation of baseline information and any restriction of SMM access undermines the process. We therefore urge all sides, in particular the Russia-backed separatists, to abide by the withdrawal agreement fully and without delay. This should be accompanied by the full and unconditional withdrawal of all heavy weapons in accordance with the Minsk Package of Measures. We urge the Security Working Group to swiftly agree on concrete, immediate steps to this end.

We note recent discussions on setting up the remaining planned SMM Forward Patrol Bases in separatist-held parts of Donetsk and we urge the separatists to fully cooperate to ensure the swift establishment of outstanding bases. This should further advance the SMM's important monitoring and verification efforts. To this end, however, we deeply regret that SMM monitors and UAVs still face significant restrictions in large swaths of separatist-held areas, in particular north-east of Mariupol and along the state border with Russia. These obstructions are unacceptable and must cease at once. Full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine is crucial for the SMM to fulfil its mandate.

We are appalled by recent steps by separatists to block Médecins Sans Frontières from certain parts of Donetsk and Luhansk. Notwithstanding the highly overdue decision by separatists to allow UN agencies to deliver humanitarian assistance in parts of Luhansk, the past three months have seen several actions by separatists to impede international humanitarian organisations in delivering vital assistance and in helping people in need. This is against the background of continuous inflow of Russian so-called humanitarian convoys, on which our position is well-known. We call on all sides to abide by international humanitarian principles and to ensure full and safe humanitarian access without delay. With winter fast approaching, we urge the relevant working groups to agree on the reconstruction of critical infrastructure and to make rapid progress on the modalities for tackling mines and unexploded ordnances.

We urge the Political Working Group to agree on the modalities for local elections in certain parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, relevant OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR, as agreed by the 'Normandy four' leaders in Paris 2 October.

The European Union remains firm in its call on all parties to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and also once again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists to meet their commitments. The ceasefire must be respected. All heavy weapons must be withdrawn and foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential. In this regard, we reiterate our concern about reports regarding the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia, including the presence of a Zhytel jamming communication station and a TOS-1 Buratino in separatist-held areas. We recall that the duration of the EU economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Mr Chair, the European Union recalls its unwavering support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to recognise these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times, to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilise the situation and to 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 Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.