



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1313 Vienna, 13 May 2021

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

The European Union remains deeply concerned about last month’s escalatory actions by the Russian Federation, including the unusual military build-up in the areas adjacent to its state border with Ukraine and in the illegally-annexed Crimean peninsula. The announcement regarding the withdrawal of troops was a first step in the right direction, but we now need to see these words translated into concrete actions on the ground, so that all recently deployed troops and equipment are removed from the vicinity of its state border with Ukraine as well as from Crimea. In this context, we call on Russia to cease its provocations and to de-escalate the situation. We also urge Russia to uphold the OSCE principles and commitments it has signed up to on transparency about its military forces and activities and to follow up on the recommendations put forward by participating States at the joint PC-FSC meeting of 14 April.

The PC Decision 1117 specifies that the SMM shall have safe and secure access throughout Ukraine. This includes Crimea. Full access for the SMM is essential to ensure effective monitoring and reporting on the security situation in line with its mandate. Therefore, it is highly worrisome that the SMM continues to experience increasing restrictions on its freedom of movement. The fact that the SMM monitors now are demanded to fill in and sign so-called “customs declarations” to be allowed to cross the contact line is a clear breach of the SMM’s freedom of movement enshrined in its mandate and in the Minsk Agreements. We strongly urge Russia to use its

considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to ensure that the SMM can operate in line with its mandate.

Since the end of March, the SMM has experienced an unprecedented increase in interference with its technical equipment. This is unacceptable. The SMM reports almost constant GPS signal interference, including on take-off and landing in areas near their base in Stepanivka. For example, on 6 May, a long-range UAV experienced jamming during take-off, during its flight over NGCAs and during three attempted emergency landings. According to the SMM, this interference could have originated from anywhere within a radius of tens of kilometres from the UAVs' positions. Long-range UAVs are an essential part of SMM operations, especially at night and in areas where the Mission's monitoring and freedom of movement are restricted. Such attacks hinder the SMM's ability to conduct effective monitoring and reporting of the security situation in line with its mandate. Those responsible must be held accountable, both politically and financially.

We call on Russia to engage constructively in the TCG discussions, instead of portraying itself as a neutral mediator. It was Russia's acts of aggression and illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol that started this seven year-long conflict, which Russia is also fuelling by providing financial and military support to the armed formations it backs. It is time for Russia to take responsibility for its actions and implement the Minsk Agreements in full.

The UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter outline the fundamental principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of any State and the prohibition of any use of force to change borders. On this basis, we continue to condemn Russia's illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula. We are deeply concerned with the ongoing human rights violations on the peninsula, as systematic repression of individuals seen to oppose so-called de facto authorities continues unabated. It is also worrying that Russia continues with its militarisation of the peninsula, and we are concerned about Russia's announced closure of certain parts of the Black Sea to foreign state vessels until October 2021.

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 fuelling 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.