



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1105
Vienna, 16 June 2016**

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

The European Union is deeply concerned by the further deterioration of the security situation in eastern Ukraine. Last week was the third consecutive week in Donetsk – and the fourth in Luhansk – of rising ceasefire violations. The level of reported ceasefire violations is on par with the overall level of violence prior to 29 April, when the sides recommitted to the ceasefire. Heavy weapons remain densely concentrated in hotspots, creating a significant risk of further escalation.

We deplore the actions of separatists to advance their positions, including moving to a checkpoint near Horlivka 900m forward, placing it little more than a kilometre away from a Ukrainian checkpoint; and moving 450m forward a checkpoint now located on Stanytsia Luhanska bridge, north of the Siverskyi Donetsk river and across the contact line. Such moves violate the Minsk agreements and increase the risk of further destabilisation. We urge all sides to take immediate steps to disengage, strictly adhere to the ceasefire and ensure the unconditional and verifiable withdrawal of all Minsk-regulated weapons. These are necessary steps in order to move towards a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

Significant restrictions on the SMM’s monitors and obstruction of the SMM’s monitoring equipment persist on daily basis, the overwhelming majority of which occur in separatist-held areas. The Mission has lost the services of three UAVs and the power supply to the SMM’s two cameras, which were disabled by separatists on May 20th, has only been reconnected this week. Such actions seriously undermine the SMM’s remote monitoring capacity. This is unacceptable. We also condemn the continuing series of attacks and acts of intimidation against the SMM and its monitors and we reiterate our firm position that the mission must have full, safe and

unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border.

We call on the sides in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups to agree on concrete steps that advance the implementation of the Minsk agreements. This includes measures to enhance the security situation including by agreeing on the disengagement plan put forth by the Chief Monitor, and reaching an agreement on the modalities of holding local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. We reiterate our firm position that established conditions for ODIHR monitoring, including ensuring security and access, must be met. We also call on the sides to agree on the further exchange of prisoners and detainees.

We welcome the fact that two Ukrainian prisoners were released from Russian captivity on 14 June in exchange for two prisoners held in Ukraine.

We remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and yet again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet those commitments in full. Moreover, we again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists. The ceasefire must be respected. All Minsk-regulated 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. The duration of the European Union's economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements. We reiterate our deep concern about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in separatist-held areas.

The EU recalls its unwavering support to 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 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 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, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members 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.