



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1269 Vienna, 28 May 2020

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

The European Union remains concerned about the fact that the commitments to a full and comprehensive ceasefire, made at the Normandy Summit last December, are still not implemented. Since the beginning of May, SMM patrols have been exposed to ceasefire violations in their close proximity on six occasions, a notable increase when compared to the single violation reported the previous two months. One of these worrying incidents happened on 22 May when there were shots of small-arms fire passing about 10 metres above the heads of an SMM patrol close to Vesela Hora. The safety and security of the SMM is the responsibility of all participating States and such actions are absolutely unacceptable. In addition, those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

The European Union deplores the fact that the freedom of movement of the SMM continues to be restricted. As the SMM takes stringent precautionary measures, COVID-19 should not be used as a pretext for such restrictions. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full and to stop this hindrance to the SMM in fulfilling its mandate.

We remain worried about the fact that armed formations are still present, including some wearing JCCC armbands, in the disengagement areas, as reported by the SMM. Complying with previous agreements is a prerequisite for building confidence and the basis for making further progress. It is therefore concerning that the commitments to

disengage are not fully adhered to. We are also concerned about the increase in the overall number of trucks crossing the Russian-Ukrainian border at the Gukovo and Donetsk checkpoints. Apparently, the movement of transport is continuing without any major COVID-19 implications.

We note the extraordinary meetings of the Trilateral Contact Group and the Security working group on 22 May that were held to discuss the increase in tension in the conflict zone. The European Union firmly supports the continued international diplomatic efforts by the Trilateral Contact Group and its representatives from Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE. We urge the sides to implement the commitments of the Minsk Agreements, including those undertaken by them at the Normandy Summit on 9 December, in good faith. In this context, we commend the Ukrainian leadership for their constructive approach and the political will to negotiate an end to the conflict and call on Russia to act likewise, including within the Trilateral Contact Group.

We also call on the sides to increase efforts in agreeing on an updated de-mining plan. The SMM has recently spotted at least 1.450 mines in areas along the contact line, which confirms that eastern Ukraine remains one of the places most severely affected by mines and unexploded ordnance in the world. We welcome the demining activities of the Ukrainian Forces around cemeteries and encourage the sides to continue demining critical civilian infrastructure, such as schools and entry and exit checkpoints.

In the Permanent Council last week, we again heard a recurring disinformation narrative by one participating State accusing others, including EU Member States, of involvement in Ukraine in 2014. Let us state for the record – such accusations are groundless and this was merely an attempt to divert attention from its own interference in a neighboring country, using false pretext and denial, and from its grave violations of international law and OSCE principles. Nothing can justify the use force in breach of international law and in an attempt to change internationally recognised borders. The EU supports Ukraine's territorial integrity, unity and independence as a sovereign State. We call upon Russia to do likewise.

The EU also rejects any unfounded criticism concerning the military cooperation that several EU Member States conduct with Ukraine. We recall the long-standing principle of the OSCE, outlined in the Charter of Paris, that all participating States have the

freedom to choose their own security arrangements. Political and security cooperation between sovereign States is a normal practice, in particular when it is conducted in a transparent way.

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 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 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 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*, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as 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.