



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1186
Vienna, 17 May 2018**

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

Mr. Chairperson, the European Union strongly condemns the targeting of unarmed civil monitors. On 15 May an SMM Patrol was nearly hit by small arms fire, while facilitating access for employees of the Voda Donbassa water company to the Donetsk Filtration Station (DFS) who try to keep the station operational. This grave incident occurred despite explicit security guarantees for that area provided by the sides. We condemn in the strongest possible terms any actions that put our monitors at risk. The European Union and others have repeatedly called on the sides to immediately stop ceasefire violations around critical civilian infrastructure, notably the Donetsk Filtration Station. However, as Tuesday’s incident shows, the indiscriminate shelling continues, which puts SMM monitors and civilians at grave risk. This must stop. The sides must abide by their commitments and take concrete steps to create safety zones around essential civilian infrastructure. In this vein, we reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to return to the JCCC and on Russia and Ukraine to re-establish the functionality of the JCCC and to strengthen cooperation within its framework.

Mr. Chairperson, severe impediments to the freedom of movement and action of the SMM continue to take place, particularly in areas held by Russia-backed separatists. In the last days, the SMM was repeatedly demanded to leave in non-government controlled areas, e.g. at a border crossing point near Voznesenivka, at the Chervona Mohyla railway station near Voznesenivka, and at the border crossing point near Izvaryne while an armed man in non-government controlled Dovhe prevented the SMM from conducting a UAV flight in the area. On 10 May the SMM was stopped three times by armed members of the armed formations at checkpoints in non-government-controlled areas and the SMM was only allowed to proceed after the armed men had been allowed to inspect their vehicles. These instances are all clear

violations of the SMM mandate, which clearly states that the monitors and their technical equipment should have safe, secure and unhindered access throughout Ukraine. This includes the Crimean peninsula and along the Ukrainian-Russian border. We strongly condemn these persistent and systemic impediments to the freedom of movement of the SMM and call on those in effective control of these areas to put an end to all impediments to the work of the SMM. Those responsible for obstructing the SMM's work should be held accountable. We reiterate our call on the sides to stop jamming and targeting SMM UAVs. The operational, security and financial consequences of these obstructions must be assessed and the parties responsible for any damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs should be held accountable, including politically and financially.

The security situation remains very volatile and unpredictable, despite ongoing efforts in the TCG to put in place additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire. Positions near the contact line remain close and firing of weapons from and into residential areas continue to take a toll on civilians in the form of casualties and damage to properties. One man was injured by small-arms fire in non-government controlled Olenivka on 29 April while running to seek shelter from small-arms fire together with his wife and daughter.

The EU underlines its grave concerns regarding the situation at a number of mines in eastern Ukraine. At the Yunkom mine in non-government controlled Bunhe, flooding would risk contaminating the water table with radiological waste. At the mine in Zolote/Pervomaisk pumping has stopped, which has led to increased flooding at an alarming pace, which endangers the drinking water supply and the exploitation of the mine. It is in the interest of all sides to avoid long-term environmental and ecological damage which could have a huge humanitarian impact on the civilian population. We strongly urge the sides to engage urgently on these issues, including through the Trilateral Contact Group. The OSCE should be ready to assist and support, including through contacts with relevant actors, any practical steps and implementation of measures that would help to improve the situation on the ground.

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 in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these

must be restored. We 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. We also call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to put an end to any restrictions hindering the SMM in carrying out its work according to its mandate. We again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists, and 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.

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 stabilising the situation and reversing moves that contravene these principles.

We note that 18 May marks the 74th anniversary of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars, among others. Today, we remain gravely concerned about the human rights situation on the Crimean Peninsula. Over the past four years the people living on the peninsula have been faced with severe restrictions to their fundamental freedoms. Representatives of the Crimean Tatar community face systematic persecution. Human rights and fundamental freedoms must be protected.

The EU condemns the construction by Russia of the Kerch Strait Bridge, which represents yet another violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and of international law. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of 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 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.

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