



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1119 Vienna, 17 November 2016

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

Discussions in this council have on occasion, as witnessed last week, focused on language. Words matter, we agree, but actions matter more. Too often, efforts to implement the Minsk agreements, and Russia’s responsibility in this regard, have been marked by a detrimental gap between words and deeds. Further actions required by the sides are clear.

We echo Chief Monitor Apakan’s strong call last week on the sides to exercise maximum restraint and establish a full and sustainable ceasefire. This must go hand-in-hand with full and verifiable withdrawal of Minsk-proscribed weapons, complete disengagement in the agreed pilot disengagement areas, full, safe and unhindered SMM access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border, and humanitarian access. The human suffering on the ground continues, exacerbated by the current deterioration along the line of contact, and underlining yet again the need for a sustainable political solution to the conflict in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

It is inexcusable that the SMM’s monitors and their remote monitoring equipment continue to face significant obstacles and dangerous intimidation, most frequently in areas held by Russia-backed separatists. Last Wednesday, several shells impacted near an SMM patrol in separatist-held parts of Donetsk. The close shelling continued as the patrol sought to leave and a large truck blocked its path, forcing the SMM to take an alternative route. This is unacceptable. We call on the JCCC to take due action. Those responsible must be held to account.

Moreover, almost two months since the Framework Agreement on disengagement was signed, the SMM’s access remains restricted in all three disengagement areas, particularly due to the alleged presence of mines and

unexploded ordnance, which the sides have committed to clear or fence off, and the lack of security guarantees by the JCCC. And the SMM is still being prevented from setting up planned Forward Patrol Bases in separatist-held areas, such as in Amvrosivka and Antratsit, which would be a necessary step towards giving the SMM better conditions for monitoring, including in border areas.

We again call on the sides in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups to agree on steps toward the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. This includes 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 reiterate our call on the sides to agree on the exchange of all hostages and illegally detained persons and to agree on steps to prevent civilian casualties and reduce the risk to critical civilian infrastructure along the line of contact.

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 in order to achieve a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We reiterate our deep concern 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, 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.