



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1316 Vienna, 27 May 2021

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

Madam Chair, effective and comprehensive monitoring of the Russia-Ukraine state border is essential to assess the security situation and make progress towards a sustainable political solution to the conflict. In this respect, the Minsk Protocol provides for permanent monitoring of the border and verification by the OSCE and the Minsk Package of Measures includes the commitment to reinstate full Ukrainian control over its entire international border.

The Observer Mission in Gukovo and Donetsk constitutes an important confidence-building tool and contributes to increased transparency, which is much needed to reduce tensions on the ground. We are therefore deeply concerned that Russia does not seem ready to agree to extend the mandate of the Observer Mission for four months, as has been the practice. The reduction of its mandate cycle would add extra administrative burden to the Mission. In repeating our call for a longer Mission mandate, we call on Russia to agree to another four months extension of the mandate so that the Mission’s operations and effective management are not hindered.

We regret that the security situation in the conflict zone does not show any sign of improvement. We share Ambassador Heidi Grau’s serious concern about the high level of ceasefire violations, with an average of 450 ceasefire violations per day so far this month, and the increased use of heavy weapons deployed in violation of the withdrawal lines. We also see rising numbers of civilian casualties also from shelling and shooting as well as damage to civilian infrastructure. It is also concerning that the

SMM has recorded “increased kinetic activity” inside and near to the disengagement areas of Zolote and Petrivske. We deplore recurrent military provocations. We commend Ukraine for its restraint in responding to such provocations by the Russia-backed armed formations, despite the regrettable and unacceptable death toll among its military personnel. Ceasefire can only be preserved if both sides equally stick to their commitments made in the TCG.

We condemn the continued restrictions to the freedom of movement of the OSCE SMM and targeting of its UAVs, which have a negative effect on the implementation of the Mission's mandate. The SMM must have safe, secure, unconditional and unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence to ensure that the SMM can operate in line with its mandate.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians are currently separated from family members and cut off from their livelihood, pensions, medical care and other services as some entry and exit checkpoints along the contact line are not operational. We thus appreciate the attempts in the humanitarian working group of the TCG to find a solution which would enable the opening of the checkpoints at Zolote and Shchastia also on the side controlled by the Russia-backed armed formations. We also note that all border crossing points to the Russian Federation remain open. We also welcome the steps taken by Ukraine to open the Shchastia and Zolote EECPs and to provide services for the residents of the non-government controlled areas. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to ensure a synchronized and transparent opening of these two EECPs, as well as the reopening of all currently closed EECPs, in order to improve the humanitarian situation at the contact line and to allow for progress in the rehabilitation of economic ties.

We deplore and decisively reject the distorted narrative of the conflict that Russia tries to advance here at the OSCE and elsewhere, presenting itself as mere mediator of an “internal Ukrainian conflict”. We also reject insinuations about the alleged “responsibility of the West” for this conflict and its victims. The Minsk Protocol signed by the Russian Federation is unambiguous in stating that the TCG consists of representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE. Russia has therefore clearly and legally accepted its responsibility for the peaceful settlement of the conflict and the implementation of the Minsk agreements. In this respect, Russia’s

attempts to legitimize the so-called “people’s republics” in eastern Ukraine are not constructive and an obstruction to negotiations. The Minsk Agreements do not mention the necessity to establish a "direct dialogue" between Kyiv and the non-government controlled areas. The Package of Measures only provides for consultations with so-called “representatives of the certain areas in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions” with regard constitutional amendments and the special order of local self-government (special status) as well as the law on local elections. We therefore urge Russia to take responsibility for its actions, to act constructively within the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy Format and to implement the Minsk Agreements in full.

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 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.