



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1106  
Vienna, 23 June 2016**

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

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We are deeply concerned by the deteriorating security situation in eastern Ukraine. The dense concentration of heavy weapons and the close proximity of military formations across the line of contact, exacerbated by the separatists' recent provocative advancement of two checkpoints, increase the risk of further escalation. Meanwhile, the SMM continues to face obstruction, particularly in separatist-held areas, where an exclusively in Russia produced Zhitel jamming station was recently observed again by the SMM. We condemn all attempts to prevent the SMM from fulfilling its mandate, by intimidating the mission's members and by depriving the SMM of technological assets. All sides must immediately disengage, strictly adhere to the ceasefire, unconditionally and verifiably withdraw all Minsk-regulated weapons and ensure the SMM full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border and to the illegally annexed Crimea. These are necessary steps in order to move towards a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

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. We welcome progress made on the principles and priority areas for disengagement, and call on the sides to build on this by agreeing to a complete disengagement plan without further delay. We also call for an agreement on the modalities of local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. We recall our firm position that established conditions for ODIHR monitoring, including ensuring security and access, must be met.

We are concerned by the continuous disinformation campaign by separatist-controlled media outlets targeting the SMM and its monitors. Instead of working to broaden public support for the SMM, separatists are curbing or conditioning the SMM's access to the local population and orchestrating mass protests, as seen recently in Donetsk. This runs contrary to repeated assurances of cooperation. We commend the SMM for continuing its outreach to the local population in the face of such obstacles and support further steps to this end.

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.

We remain deeply concerned by the significant deterioration of the human rights situation in Crimea since the peninsula's illegal annexation by Russia. As the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, ODIHR, the High Commissioner National Minorities, and others have documented, fundamental freedoms have been systematically curtailed. Over the past two years, those responsible for the situation on the ground have created a pervasive climate of fear and repression in Crimea. Crimean voices who have dared oppose Russia's actions have faced harassment, arrest and torture. The persecution of Crimean Tatars has been particularly brutal, including the ban of the activities of the Mejlis. The case of the enforced disappearance of Crimean Tatar Evin Ibragimov, member of the Bakhchysaray Regional Medzhilis, abducted by uniformed persons on 24 May, is regrettably only one of the most recent examples. We condemn this repression, call on those responsible for the situation on the ground to protect the human rights of all in

Crimea and reiterate our call for full, immediate and unfettered access for international human rights actors to the peninsula.

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. Accordingly, on 17 June, the European Council extended the EU's restrictive measures in response to the illegal annexation to 23 June 2017.

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 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.