



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1132 Vienna, 2 February 2017

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

We remain deeply concerned by the dire humanitarian situation in the Avdiivka area following the escalation in fighting, the destruction of critical infrastructure, and the lack of access for international humanitarian actors. Thousands of civilians, including children, are in harm’s way, struggling through a harsh winter without basic utilities and vital humanitarian aid. As we stated two days ago, government-controlled Avidiika is on the brink of a humanitarian disaster. We welcome the swift steps taken by the Ukrainian government to provide some relief to the affected population. We support the efforts by the SMM and the JCCC to allow for much needed repair of critical infrastructure. We deplore the continued significant access restrictions on international humanitarian actors in Russian-backed separatist-held areas.

The European Union welcomes the agreement reached yesterday by the sides in the Trilateral Contact Group to recommit to a full ceasefire with immediate effect, to withdraw by February 5 all Minsk-regulated weapons to permanent storage sites, to ensure safe a secure access for the SMM and to facilitate humanitarian efforts. We expect this agreement to be implemented by all sides on the ground without delay.

The steps needed by the sides to avoid a further deterioration and a humanitarian crisis are clear: full respect of the ceasefire, full and verifiable withdrawal of Minsk-proscribed weapons, complete disengagement and full, safe and unhindered access for the SMM and humanitarian actors. We call on the JCCC to support any actions to this end.

The SMM continues to face intimidation and significant restrictions on both sides of the contact line, including in the border area, where the SMM’s access is patchy and tightly

monitored by separatists. We therefore again call on the sides to ensure full, safe and unhindered SMM access throughout Ukraine without further delay. Any intimidation and restriction aimed at the SMM is unacceptable as it prevents the SMM from observing the full picture on the ground. We also again underline the importance of a timely extension of the SMM mandate and that the mission is adequately resourced.

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 local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in full 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 first be met. We call on the sides to agree on additional disengagement areas, the release of all hostages and illegally detained persons, and to swiftly resume work in the economic working group.

We remain firm in our 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. 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. 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 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 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, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.