

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Permanent Council N° 1184
Vienna, 3 May 2018**

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

Mr. Chairperson, The SMM mandate, which has been endorsed by all 57 participating states, is clear in its call for safe, secure and unhindered access for the SMM throughout Ukraine. This includes the Crimean peninsula and along the Ukrainian-Russian border. It is therefore with great dismay that we learn of ever more incidents designed to hinder the work of the SMM. Most recently, on 28 April an SMM patrol was stopped at a checkpoint north of Horlivka, an area held by Russia-backed separatists, where armed men demanded to inspect their vehicles. When the SMM refused to allow this, they were threatened with detention by a “Special Forces Team”. This behavior is unacceptable and a flagrant violation of the SMM mandate. Such threatening behavior directed towards our monitors must stop. We reiterate our call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to put an end to any restrictions. We further reiterate our call for the Russian Federation to return to the JCCC, calling also on Russia and Ukraine to re-establish the functionality of the JCCC and to strengthen cooperation within its framework.

Safe, secure and unhindered access for the SMM also includes their technical equipment. We are therefore deeply concerned that the sides continue to target the SMM UAVs. We strongly reiterate our call on the sides to respect these commitments. 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. In addition, and as mentioned last week, we are profoundly concerned about the presence of mines - old and new ones. Their presence is a breach of commitments given by the sides and puts SMM monitors as well as civilians at risk. We condemn any laying of mines in the strongest possible terms and

call on all sides to refrain from laying new mines, and to mark, fence and clear existing mines.

On 17 April, several Voda Donbassa employees were seriously injured when travelling in a company bus near the Donetsk Water Filtration Station. This was the fourth time that Voda Donbassa vehicles carrying its own employees have been hit by shelling or shooting near the DFS in the past two months. We strongly condemn that ceasefire violations continue to take place in the near vicinity of the DFS despite security guarantees having been obtained by the SMM, who is facilitating access for the employees. We call on all sides to put a halt to any shelling near civilian infrastructure immediately. As pointed out by Chief Monitor Apakan last week, the SMM – through the facilitation and monitoring of hundreds of windows of silence, including at the Donetsk Filtration Station – has done its part; now others must do theirs. The DFS alone supplies water to at least 345,000 people on both sides of the line of contact and its continued operation is of crucial importance.

We have previously stated our concern about the alleged plans to flood the Yunkom mine in non-government controlled Bunhe. Flooding of the mine could have severe environmental and humanitarian implications, as underlined by the coordinator of the TCG Economic Working Group Mr. Per Fischer in his briefing two weeks ago. We strongly urge the sides to agree on an expert assessment of the potential risk associated with flooded mines and other infrastructure on both sides of the contact line. We further call on the sides to work together in the framework of the TCG to assess dangers associated with certain infrastructure sites and work towards better protecting these in order to mitigate environmental and humanitarian risks in the conflict area.

We are concerned that the SMM has been observing an increase in the number of ceasefire violations inside disengagement areas. In the reporting period from 16-22 April the SMM recorded ceasefire violations assessed as being inside the Zolote disengagement area for the first time in seven weeks, whereas ceasefire violations went from 8 to 96 in Petrivske disengagement area and from zero to 25 in Stanytsia Luhanska disengagement area. The sides are thereby disregarding their own commitments given in the TCG and we call on the sides to disengage and withdraw heavy weapons.

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. 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 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 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.