

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Permanent Council Nr 990
Vienna, 20 March 2014**

**EU Statement in Reply to the Address by the
Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine,
H.E. Mr Andrii Deshchytsia**

The European Union warmly welcomes Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, H.E. Mr Andrii Deshchytsia, to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his presence here today and for his sobering and essential address at this crucial point in time for Ukraine and for the rest of Europe.

We are witnessing a dramatic period in the history of Ukraine and of the European continent. Dramatic events in Ukraine represent a serious setback for Europe's peace and stability. We applaud the courage and resilience of the Ukrainian people during these last difficult months and weeks, and we once again commend the measured response shown by the Ukrainian Government.

We reiterate our strong condemnation of the unprovoked violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by the Russian Federation. These actions are in clear breach of the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act. We urge Russia to take steps to de-escalate the crisis, immediately withdraw its forces back to their pre-crisis number and garrisons in line with its international commitments, begin direct discussions with the Government of Ukraine, and avail itself of all relevant international mechanisms to find a peaceful and negotiated solution, in full respect of its bilateral and multilateral commitments to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We regret that Russia's actions contradict these objectives. However, we remain

ready to engage and promote any constructive dialogue with all parties aimed at reaching such a peaceful solution and will continue our engagement in international facilitation efforts.

The sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine must be respected. The European Union strongly condemns the holding of an illegal “referendum” in Crimea on joining the Russian Federation, in clear breach of the Ukrainian constitution. We recognise neither the illegal and illegitimate “referendum” in Crimea, nor its outcome. We strongly condemn the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, in breach of international law. We do not and will not recognise this.

We strongly condemn the armed attack on a cartographic unit of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in Simferopol, in which one Ukrainian soldier was shot dead. We are also deeply concerned about the killing of Mr. Reshat Ametov, a Crimean Tatar, suspected to be a victim of ethnic violence in Crimea. We call on everyone to exercise restraint in this tense situation to avoid further loss of human lives.

We draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the decision by the EU Foreign Affairs Council on 17 March to introduce additional measures against persons responsible for actions which undermine or threaten the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. The Foreign Affairs Council also stated that any further steps by the Russian Federation to destabilise the situation in Ukraine will lead to additional and far-reaching consequences for relations in a broad range of economic areas between the European Union and its Member States, on the one hand, and the Russian Federation on the other.

Mr Chairman,

We continue to believe that the OSCE has a very important and valuable role to play in helping to stabilise the situation and solve this crisis. The EU considers that there is an urgent need for an international presence on the ground throughout Ukraine, particularly the Eastern and Southern parts, including in Crimea, and we support the swift deployment of an OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. We highly appreciate the constructive engagement of the Government of Ukraine in paving the way for such a Mission. We would have liked to have had a decision by now to deploy a monitoring mission, and the EU and its Member States stand ready to contribute to the mission with staff and financial resources. We continue to seek a decision on this monitoring mission. We deplore the Russian position that stands in the way of an urgent and much needed deployment of monitors, and we believe that the Russian attitude in these negotiations contradicts the spirit and principles of the OSCE.

We strongly support all efforts of the OSCE Chairmanship, the Executive Structures and the Project Coordinator in Ukraine. We welcome the fact that the National Dialogue Project is now being implemented. We underline the importance of granting free access to all parts of the territory of Ukraine to the OSCE, and we reiterate our strong concern about the denial of access to Crimea to observers invited by the Government of Ukraine in the framework of the Vienna Document.

Mr Chairman,

We stand by Ukraine. We continue to encourage the Ukrainian authorities to implement an inclusive process, to pursue their efforts to ensure free and fair elections and to advance constitutional reform, and to guarantee media freedom including the safety of journalists. All human rights violations and acts of violence need to be properly investigated and measures need to be stepped up to combat impunity. In this context, the EU looks forward to the

early establishment of the Council of Europe International Advisory Panel and welcomes the ongoing Human Rights Assessment Mission conducted in collaboration between ODIHR and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and we welcome the engagement of the Ukrainian authorities on these issues.

At the meeting of the European Council today and tomorrow the situation in Ukraine will be discussed and a united European response will be agreed. Tomorrow morning, the EU Heads of State and Government will sign the political provisions of the Association Agreement with Ukraine together with the Prime Minister of Ukraine Arseniy Yatseniuk. This will be an important step in deepening our relations.

The EU wishes to express its appreciation to Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Andrii Deshchytzia, for his presence at the Permanent Council today and we wish him and his country all the best for the future.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidates ALBANIA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.