



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1042 Vienna, 5 March 2015

EU Statement on Russia's Aggression against Ukraine and Violations of OSCE Principles and Commitments

We welcome reports by the Special Monitoring Mission that the ceasefire is being largely respected in most areas along the line of contact. Full respect for the ceasefire is a basic precondition for the implementation of other provisions of the Minsk agreements as outlined in the Minsk package of 12 February. We regret instances of ceasefire violations, including near Mariupol and Donetsk airport. We note SMM's assessment that attacks on government controlled towns east of Mariupol may indicate an attempt to test the eastern defences of the city. We reiterate that any attempts by the Russia-backed separatists to gain control of additional territory will be a clear breach of the Minsk agreements and seriously undermine all efforts promoting a sustainable political solution.

The SMM has observed movement of some heavy weapons from both sides of the line of contact. In this context, we deeply regret that the SMM has not received the baseline information that would allow the SMM to verify a withdrawal in line with the provisions of the Minsk package. Without this there is a risk that heavy weapons might be relocated and be included in a new military build-up. Therefore, the SMM must continue to insist on receiving this information which we call on the parties to provide without delay. Even if heavy weapons are withdrawn outside the 'security zone', verification must be ensured. We note with regret that Russia has still not replied to the letter of Ambassador Apakan of 13 February. Attempts by Russia and the separatists to have the SMM confirming a withdrawal, without giving the SMM the information and unconditional access to verify this, are clearly unacceptable.

We continue to note the continued presence of heavy military equipment in areas controlled by the separatists. We call for the immediate withdrawal of all foreign

armed formations, military equipment, as well as mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine under monitoring of the OSCE as well as disarmament of all illegal groups. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard. We call for the full implementation of all aspects of the Minsk agreements by all signatories, including substantial and effective OSCE monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. We reiterate that re-establishing Ukrainian control over its border remains essential. We underline that there is a close link between sanctions and the full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

We reiterate our strong support for the SMM. Its role has become even more vital as we rely on the SMM to facilitate the implementation of key aspects of the Minsk agreements. We need a robust SMM working at full capacity and with full and free access to independently monitor and verify developments, without any external pressure, including in all parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and along the border with Russia. We call on all sides to provide security and safety and access for SMM monitors. We reiterate our support for an extension of SMM's mandate and look forward to an early decision on extension. The EU stands ready to further support the SMM, including through financial and operational contributions. The SMM is a collective OSCE endeavor and this should be fully reflected in the funding arrangement.

We once again express our support for the work of Ambassador Tagliavini and the Trilateral Contact Group of Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE Chairmanship.

Mr Chairman, we continue to closely follow the media coverage of the crisis in and around Ukraine. We are very concerned about the use of propaganda in Russian state-owned media outlets that fuel hatred and extremism. The ongoing information war must stop. We share the concern expressed by the Representative on Freedom of the Media in regard to limitations on Russian media outlets and on some Russian journalists working in Ukraine. We note the observation of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights about continuing attacks on journalists in Ukraine, in particularly in eastern areas controlled by armed groups and in Crimea. The death of a Ukrainian photojournalist in the Donetsk region on 28 February is another stark

reminder of the alarming security situation for journalists covering the conflict.

In its ninth report, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine again presents the outstanding and emerging human rights challenges in the eastern regions of Ukraine, and in illegally annexed Crimea, as well as other parts of the country. We note the observation that in areas controlled by the separatists “parallel structures” have been established and the break down in law and order in these areas accommodates persistent violations of the rights of civilians, including abductions, arbitrary detention, beatings and alleged torture. We also note that the situation in Crimea continues to be characterised by systematic human rights violations affecting mostly Crimean Tatars and those who opposed the so-called March “referendum”.

Mr Chairman, we recall that the Minsk package calls for humanitarian aid to be delivered through an international mechanism. We deeply regret that so-called humanitarian convoys from Russia continue to enter Ukrainian territory, without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities and in clear violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and without fundamental international humanitarian principles being observed.

The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We once again urge Russia to recognise by acts these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute 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*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries NORWAY and LIECHTENSTEIN, 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.

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