



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1275 Vienna, 16 July 2020

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

Mr. Chairman, the European Union is cautiously optimistic after hearing from Ambassador Grau last week that the work of TCG has been more constructive and that some progress may be possible in the TCG during the coming meetings. After months of absence of results in the discussions, and with the Covid-19 pandemic further increasing the hardship of the conflict-affected population, we would welcome advancement on issues such as preparation works for simultaneous new entry-exit check points by Zolote and Shastye, an updated demining plan and another release and exchange of conflict-related detainees. In this context, we commend the political will and constructive approach by Ukraine on the settlement of this conflict. The re-opening of the remaining temporarily closed entry-exit check points is crucial and we call for simple and adequate crossing procedures avoiding unnecessary restrictions.

The Minsk agreements remain the only framework for a peaceful settlement allowing for the full respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. As a signatory of the Minsk agreements, Russia has accepted its responsibility for a sustainable political settlement of the conflict and the implementation of the provisions of these agreements. We urge the Russian Federation to assume this responsibility by acting constructively within the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy format.

Mr. Chairperson, the European Union has many times repeated that the restrictions on the freedom of movement of the Special Monitoring Mission are serious violations of

its mandate and are absolutely unacceptable. As we heard from the SMM Chief Monitor last week, the undue restrictions faced by the SMM when attempting to cross the contact line make it increasingly difficult for the mission to sustain its operations in the non-government controlled areas and between the non-government controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk. The EU will remain firm in its call on the Russian Federation to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to make sure that no undue restrictions are placed on the SMM.

As Ambassador Cevik reminded us about last week, three SMM cameras were destroyed in June and numerous SMM UAV's have been lost due to small arms fire or signal interference. This is absolutely unacceptable. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other technical observation assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially. We recall that ensuring the safety and security of Mission staff and assets is the responsibility of all participating States. We also note with concern that on the night of 10-11 July, an SMM long-range UAV spotted three vehicles and a military-type truck heading south-west on an unpaved road near Manych.

The EU regrets that this conflict that has taken more than 13.000 lives continues to be fatal. We regret the escalation of violence in recent days and deeply deplore the killing and wounding of soldiers. We are deeply concerned about the reports of the fatal attack on 13 July against Ukrainian military medics who, according to the reports, were trying to evacuate killed and wounded Ukrainian servicemen. We reiterate our call for restraint, also in order to allow for the medical evacuation of wounded and killed servicemen and urge the sides to redouble their efforts in finding a peaceful political settlement at the earliest possible date.

The EU remains deeply concerned about the dire situation regarding human rights and fundamental freedoms in Crimea since the illegal annexation by Russia, as was lately reported in the UN SG report presented to the 44th session of UN Human Rights Council. We regret that the military court on the city of Vlasikha recently rejected the appeal of six Crimean Tatars, who were sentenced to prison for alleged terrorist activities in November 2019. In addition, on 7 July, seven individuals, mostly Crimean Tatars, were arrested in the Crimean peninsula for their alleged political affiliation. We regret politically motivated persecution and detention of Ukrainian citizens in Crimea

and the city of Sevastopol and we do not recognise the enforcement of Russian legislation in Ukrainian territory. We expect all illegally detained Ukrainian citizens to be released without delay. We urge Russia to end the pressure on the Crimean Tatar community. International human rights standards must be guaranteed in the peninsula. Full, free and unrestricted access for international human rights actors to the whole territory of Ukraine, including Crimea and Sevastopol, continues to be paramount.

We are also concerned about the attempts to impose Russian laws and regulations upon the Ukrainian population in the illegally annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and in the non-government controlled areas of Donbas. The simplified and selective procedure for Ukrainian citizens of certain areas of eastern Ukraine and Crimea to obtain a Russian passport is one example. The participation of these Ukrainian citizens with Russian passports distributed through such a procedure in the voting procedures on the amendments to the constitution of the Russian Federation is a blatant violation of international law and disregard of the spirit of the Minsk agreements. The new “legislation” in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk areas that are currently not under control by Ukrainian government stating that Russian is the only state language is also deeply concerning.

The EU remains firm in its 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 to the conflict in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility in this regard and to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. We again call on Russia to immediately stop fuelling the conflict by providing financial and military support to the armed formations, and we remain deeply concerned about the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations. 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 uphold 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 strongly condemn the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces since February 2014 and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, which we will not recognise. The European Union will remain committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.