



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1342 Vienna, 28 October 2021**

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

1. Madam Chair, the European Union condemns the severe restrictions on SMM’s freedom of movement placed by the Russia-backed armed formations. It is especially alarming that SMM monitors were for over a week prevented from leaving the Mission’s premises in the non-government controlled areas of the Donetsk region. While we welcome the fact that the situation has calmed down sufficiently to allow the SMM to resume its important work, we once again urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to ensure that the SMM’s freedom of movement is not compromised. We reiterate that the SMM must have safe and unhindered access to the whole territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders in line with the Mission’s mandate. This also includes the parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions temporarily outside government control, as well as the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. The SMM’s freedom of movement is an important provision of both the Minsk agreements and the conclusions of the Normandy Summit in Paris in December 2019, to which Russia is a signatory.
2. It is deeply worrying that the restrictions to civilians’ freedom of movement have increased even further during recent weeks as a result of tightened rules for crossing the contact line introduced by the Russia-backed armed formations. At the only entry-exit checkpoint in the Luhansk region of Ukraine, the Stanytsia Luhanska bridge, civilians can now only cross if they have a special permission, which is similar to rules already imposed in the non-government controlled areas of the Donetsk region. Reports show that the numbers of civilian crossings have drastically dropped. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to enable

the opening of all currently closed checkpoints as well as to open the new checkpoints near Zolote and Shchastia in line with the conclusions from the Normandy Summit in Paris in 2019.

3. We are concerned with the security situation in the conflict zone, especially regarding the worsening situation around the disengagement areas near Zolote and Petrivske. It is crucial to avoid further escalations and protect civilians.
4. The European Union is gravely concerned about the impact of the situation in eastern Ukraine on the civilian population, who are not only living in a conflict zone, but whose daily life has been further adversely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. This is why the European Commission has recently allocated 3.5 million euros to the most vulnerable people on both sides of the contact line to meet their basic needs and to facilitate access to health services. In total, the EU has so far allocated 29 million euros in humanitarian aid for eastern Ukraine in 2021 and since the start of the conflict, the EU has provided €194 million to help people in Ukraine.
5. The EU deplores the introduction of Russian laws and legislation in Ukrainian territory. Russia's decision to massively involve residents of the non-government controlled territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in Ukraine in the State Duma elections which ran counter to the spirit and objectives of the Minsk agreements. The EU continues to condemn the simplified and selective procedure for Ukrainian citizens to obtain Russian citizenship resulting in accelerated passportisation of residents of those regions. This procedure represents yet another attack on Ukraine's sovereignty by Russia.
6. The European Union condemns the arrest of 21 people who had gathered to observe the proceedings against Crimean Tatars Rustem Emiruseinov, Arsen Abkhairov and Eskender Abdulganiev in the Crimean peninsula, illegally annexed by Russia. The European Union calls on the Russian Federation to comply with its obligations under international law and stop human rights violations of residents in the peninsula.
7. 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 sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.

8. 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 the 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.