



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1102
Vienna, 2 June 2016**

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

The SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border. This is vital to the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Full stop. Over the past week, SMM patrols have been threatened, shot at, and an SMM UAV was shot down. This is completely unacceptable and those responsible must be held accountable. Regrettably, the increasing number of incidents involving the SMM only add to a concerning picture of recurring intimidation of the monitors and significant restrictions of SMM's access, the overwhelming majority of which continue to occur in Russia-backed separatist-held areas. This must stop at once.

The fragile situation along the line of contact deteriorated further last week. On May 26th alone, the SMM observed almost 1000 explosions, the highest number in a month. All sides must take immediate steps to reverse this negative trend by disengaging and strictly adhering to the ceasefire. All Minsk-regulated weapons must be unconditionally and verifiably withdrawn, and the SMM must receive all the information it requested from the sides more than six months ago. These are necessary steps to move towards a sustainable ceasefire, which, in the words of the Chairperson-in-Office, is essential to ensuring progress in the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

We call on the sides in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups to agree on concrete steps that advance the implementation of the Minsk agreements. This includes measures to enhance the security situation, including by agreeing on the disengagement plan put forth by the Chief Monitor, and reaching an agreement on the modalities of holding local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, OSCE standards and monitored by

ODIHR. We reiterate our firm position that established conditions for ODIHR monitoring, including ensuring security and access, must be met. We furthermore reiterate our call for progress regarding the exchange of prisoners and for the release of prisoners in an all for all exchange at the earliest opportunity.

We welcome the meeting in Vienna on May 30th hosted by the OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatović between Russian and Ukrainian journalists' unions. We warmly support their agreement to urgently address the issue of media freedom, including the safety of journalists in Crimea, facilitate a joint fact-finding mission to the Ukrainian peninsula, and expand joint programmes for young journalists from both countries.

At the same time, we remain concerned following recent statements by the RFoM with regard to attacks on journalists in Ukraine and the leaking of personal information of representatives of Ukrainian and international media outlets.

We remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments, in order to ensure a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments and based on full respect for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and yet again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet those commitments in full. Moreover, we again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists. The duration of the European Union's economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements. The ceasefire must be fully respected and all foreign armed formations, military equipment, and mercenaries fully withdrawn from the territory of Ukraine. The return of Ukrainian control over its entire state border is paramount. Full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access is needed. We reiterate our deep concern about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in separatist-held areas.

The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, 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 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* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, 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.