



EUROPEAN UNION

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**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1174
Vienna, 1 February 2018**

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

Mr. Chairperson, let me begin by reiterating our call on all sides to cease hostilities, disengage and ensure comprehensive action on mine clearance. We are, regrettably, not seeing any improvement on the ground. The number of ceasefire violations is as high as last week and the SMM continues to face restrictions primarily in areas held by Russia-backed separatists. During last week, in addition to restrictions due to mines and unexploded ordnances, the SMM was impeded 7 times – 6 of which were in areas outside of government control. Moreover, monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian border is hindered by the refusal of the separatists to provide security guarantees for the SMM to open additional forward patrol bases in the vicinity of the border.

In this context, we welcome last week’s announcement by the Secretary General at the Permanent Council that the tender process for the provision of long range UAVs has now been concluded and we look forward to the update of the Secretary General later today about the signing of the contract.

We remain concerned that the sides continue to neglect protection of civilians on the move which we raised at last week’s Permanent Council. For instance, during last week, the SMM observed various civilian buildings damaged by shelling, in Sakhanka and Dokuchaievsk, and corroborated 11 cases of civilian casualties, mostly caused by shelling. We also remain concerned that the sides continue to jeopardize the safe and secure freedom of movement of civilians. There are only four checkpoints for civilians where they have to wait for hours to pass. We strongly urge all sides to secure safe passage for civilians moving across the contact line.

The lack of security guarantees in non-government controlled areas further hinders repairs to essential civilian infrastructure and maintenance of SMM technical observation assets. Such obstruction between 30 December and 21 January has caused long delays to critical repair of telecommunication infrastructure, amongst others, and has further worsened the humanitarian situation.

We once again reiterate our call on Russia to return to the JCCC and urge Ukraine and Russia to restore the functionality of the JCCC. We further encourage the sides to continue constructive dialogue related to the release of detainees.

On 25 January yet another so-called “humanitarian convoy” from Russia entered into Ukrainian territory at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point. It was the 71st of its kind. When the SMM attempted to access the compound into which the convoy had entered, four armed members of the so-called “LPR” denied them access. Mr. Chairperson, these so-called “humanitarian convoys” without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities clearly violate Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and fundamental international humanitarian principles. The Minsk agreements foresee that humanitarian aid will be delivered through an international mechanism. An agreement on this in the humanitarian working group remains crucial.

We remain firm in our 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 in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Restoring respect for these principles is crucial. We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility and to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. We again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists, and we remain deeply concerned about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in separatist-held areas. 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 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 the

Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and we will not recognise it. The European Union will remain committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

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 and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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