



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1232 Vienna, 13 June 2019

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

Mr. Chairman the EU is deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation in the area of the conflict, which is a consequence of acts of aggression by Russia against Ukraine. We deeply regret the continued human suffering which goes hand in hand with the armed violence. We are saddened by reports about civilian injuries mostly by shrapnel in three instances in Horlivka, Donetsk and Pisky, all in the vicinity of the contact line on non-governmental controlled side and again damage to civilian infrastructure by shelling and small arms fire in Zolote-5/Mykhailivka, Sentianivka, Horlivka, Vesele, Yasynuvata, Sosnivske, Dokuchaievsk and Chermalyk. We underline once more the unbearable situation at the entry-exit checkpoints where people face long waiting hours and are even exposed to small arms fire. We strongly deplore laying of new mines, including anti-tank ones, as reported again by the SMM, and call on all sides to step up efforts on comprehensive mine action. We appreciate the TCG participants’ re-commitment to begin disengagement in the area near Stanytsia Luhanska. After a ceasefire violation it is now due to start on 16 June instead of on 10 June. We call on the participants to fully respect their commitments. We call on the Russian Federation to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to this end.

Mr. Chairman, the ongoing armed violence poses a serious threat not only to the civilian population living in the vicinity of the contact line but also to our monitors working in a hostile environment to provide us with an accurate picture of the situation on the ground. In this context we strongly deplore the incident involving an SMM patrol consisting of six members and two armoured vehicles positioned next to a checkpoint of the armed formations near non-government controlled Molodizhne, where small arms fire occurred near the SMM patrol and bullets flew about 5 meters above them from a westerly direction. Luckily nobody was injured and the SMM returned safely to their base. We repeat that such incidents are unacceptable. We strongly deplore any impediments to the SMM's work, which continued to occur predominantly in areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations. We are deeply concerned about the restrictions in the areas near the uncontrolled Ukrainian-Russian state border. These restrictions combined with poor road conditions and long distances for SMM staff to travel from bases to the border areas, continue to limit the capacity of the Mission to comprehensively monitor these areas. The fact that the SMM continue to observe trucks traveling from near the border with the Russian Federation to non-government-controlled areas of Luhansk region, as registered on the nights of 30 May-1 June and 2-3 June, further adds to our concerns. We condemn the continued targeting and jamming of the SMM's technical assets, in particular SMM UAVs where SMM has experienced shooting at UAVs near the Zolote disengagement area and in non-government controlled Pervomaisk. The SMM Daily Report of 7 June reported that small-arms fire was directed at an SMM mini-UAV inside the Zolote disengagement area. Those responsible for any willful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

Mr. Chairman, our position on the unjustified use of force by Russia near the Kerch Strait on 25 November 2018, its negative impact in the Black and Azov Seas and Russia's violations of international law is well-known. We once again urge Russia to comply without delay with the order of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) delivered on 25 May and to immediately release the 24 detained Ukrainian servicemen and allow them to return to Ukraine, to release and return to Ukraine's custody the vessels, and call on both parties to refrain from taking any action which might aggravate or

extend the dispute. We reiterate that respect for international court rulings is fundamental for an international rules-based order.

The SMM again reported about applications for Russian citizenship in areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations following the signature of the two decrees by the Russian President offering expedited Russian citizenship for Ukrainian citizens. This is yet another attack on Ukraine's sovereignty by Russia which underlines Russia's intention to further destabilise Ukraine and to exacerbate the conflict. We reiterate our call on Russia to refrain from applying the above mentioned decrees and any actions that undermine the implementation of the Minsk agreements, and could impede the full restoration of Ukrainian government control over its territory within its internationally recognised borders.

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 fueling the conflict by providing financial and military support to the armed formations, and we remain deeply concerned about information on 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 remains deeply worried about the deteriorating human rights situation in illegally annexed Crimea where Crimean Tatars continue to be disproportionately affected by police raids and prosecuted under terrorist and extremism-related offences in proceedings falling short of human rights standards. We are deeply concerned about recent house searches and arrests of Crimean Tatars. We expect Russia to end these practices and release without delay all illegally detained Ukrainians. We call for full compliance with international human rights standards in the Peninsula.

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 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.