



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1157
Vienna, 28 September 2017**

EU statement in Response to Briefings by the Special Representative in Ukraine of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Martin Sajdik and the Chief Monitor of the OSCE SMM, Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan

The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassadors Martin Sajdik and Ertugrul Apakan back to the Permanent Council and thanks them for their reports. We want to thank Ambassador Apakan for his leadership and tireless work together with his dedicated team of monitors in an increasingly difficult and hostile environment. We are particularly grateful for yesterday's briefing on the Response Plan and the security measures introduced by the SMM in response to the tragic incident of 23 April. It is still very much on our minds and we expect a regular dialogue with participating States to provide them with feedback on the implementation of the Response Plan, on a regular basis. We also advise you to maintain close coordination with the Conflict Prevention Centre. The security and safety of our monitors is paramount for all participating States.

Ambassador Sajdik, we highly appreciate your valuable work in the Trilateral Contact Group, aimed at advancing the implementation of the Minsk agreements and at finding solutions to pressing issues on the ground. In this context, we would like to underline the need to achieve concrete progress in all four thematic areas.

Your briefing comes against the backdrop of a worrying volatility of the security situation in eastern Ukraine. Despite a general decrease in ceasefire violations following the school ceasefire, heavy weapons violations continue. Hence, it is essential that the sides fully live up to their own commitments, bring the number of ceasefire violations to zero, resume disengagement, withdraw Minsk-

proscribed weapons, and ensure effective mine action. In addition, we note with concern that the sides do not seem to be willing to reverse the economic measures taken in March this year. With more and more time passing these measures, including the recognition of civil documents by the Russian Federation, create a new reality on the ground, which fortifies the division instead of diminishing it.

As pointed out in the SMM's recently published Thematic Report on Civilian Casualties in 2016 civilians, and in particular children, remain the ultimate victims of the situation on the ground. We reiterate our call on all sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect of the ceasefire, to withdraw all Minsk-proscribed weapons, to complete disengagement and to ensure comprehensive mine action. Full humanitarian access to areas held by Russia-backed separatists must be ensured, in line with international humanitarian principles. These are important steps toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these fundamental principles must be restored.

We remain deeply concerned by the lack of freedom of movement of the SMM which is critical to the execution of its mandate. The latest report by the SMM covering January to June 2017 shows that the SMM encountered about 480 restrictions and impediments - primarily in non-government-controlled areas. Incidents involving violence or threats against or in the presence of the SMM increased by roughly 40 percent, and mainly took place in areas held by Russia-backed separatists. The SMM remains a central asset of the OSCE in this crisis and any impediments, threats or intimidations are unacceptable. The EU calls on all sides to assure safe, unhindered SMM access – including along the Ukrainian-Russian border. The safety and security of the SMM must be a high priority for all OSCE participating States, and the responsibility for it lies with those in effective control of the area in which the SMM operates. We note with great concern that once again armed guards were temporarily withdrawn at the Forward Patrol Base in Horlivka. A permanent solution to this issue needs to be found. We urge Russia to exercise its influence over the separatists it backs to put an end to these restrictions and intimidation and to ensure accountability.

We continue to be extremely worried about the situation in illegally annexed Crimea. On 25 September the OHCHR published, as mandated by UNGA resolution 71/205, a report stating that in Crimea “the human rights situation has significantly deteriorated under Russian occupation (...and) grave human rights violations such as arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances, ill-treatment and torture, and at least one extra-judicial execution were documented.” These distressing facts were also voiced at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw over the last two weeks. Where a growing number of Ukrainians recounted how they have been imprisoned by the Russian so-called “authorities” in Crimea simply for their opposition to the illegal annexation by Russia. On 11 September Crimean Tatar leader Akhtem Chiyhoz was sentenced to 8 years in prison during a deeply flawed trial; meanwhile film director Oleh Sentsov and activist Oleksandr Kolchenko remain in prison over 2.000 km from their Crimean home-land. We are deeply concerned by the politically motivated trials of Akhtem Chiyhoz, Oleh Sentsov and Olexandr Kolchenko and we call for their release.

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. 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 Crimea and 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 country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well as 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.