



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 988
Vienna, 7 March 2014**

EU Statement on the Situation in Ukraine

Madam Chair,

Let me first once again, on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, thank you for being responsive to the needs of the situation. We see this meeting as an opportunity for us to express our strong support to the efforts of the Chairmanship and the OSCE Executive Structures on the ground and here in Vienna.

We appreciate the commitment of those OSCE structures and envoys who are trying to perform their duties in extremely difficult circumstances; circumstances that carry, as we have unfortunately seen in the last days, physical risk. Let me say, on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, how grateful we are for their efforts.

We continue to believe that this Organisation has a very important role to play in helping to solve this crisis, both in terms of short-term de-escalation, and to contribute to a long-term solution in accordance with legality. It is therefore in the interest of all, that OSCE structures and representatives are allowed to work on the ground unimpeded across the whole territory of Ukraine. We deeply regret that elements in Crimea have prevented entry, or forced an early departure, of those the OSCE, on behalf of all of us, have sent to Crimea. We urge the Russian Federation, and all others, to use their influence to aid the delivery of constructive outcomes on the ground.

These events indicate that the Russian Federation is trying to create irreversible, and very dangerous, facts on the ground. The Heads of State or Government of the European Union, after their meeting yesterday in Brussels, considered that: 'the decision by the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea to hold a referendum on the future status of the territory is contrary to the Ukrainian Constitution and therefore illegal'. This decision has now led to further escalation.

The Heads of State or Government strongly condemned: 'the unprovoked violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by the Russian Federation, and called on the Russian Federation to immediately withdraw its armed forces to the areas of their permanent stationing, in accordance with the relevant agreements'. They also commended the measured response shown by the new Ukrainian government.

We express deep concern at increased military activities by the Russian Federation in Crimea, and at what the HCNM sees as the risk of violent conflict and the effects it could have on all communities. We recall that the HCNM found no evidence of violations or threats to the rights of Russian speakers.

The European Council yesterday expressed its determination to press for dialogue using all available channels, and the readiness of the European Union to participate in the multilateral mechanism being prepared to de-escalate the situation. Such mechanism should have as its objectives, 'inter alia to build confidence between the parties, watch over the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, protect all citizens against intimidations, watch over the rights of minorities, help prepare free and fair elections, and monitor implementation of agreements and commitments'.

We re-iterate once more our full support to the early deployment of a larger OSCE presence on the ground. We support the efforts of the Chairmanship and the CPC to put together a monitoring mission. We need a quick decision, and strongly urge all around this table to engage and agree to it very soon. Thank you.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ICELAND+, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidates ALBANIA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as GEORGIA, ANDORRA, SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.