

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Permanent Council No 1072  
Vienna, 22 October 2015**

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**EU Statement on Russia's Ongoing Aggression against  
Ukraine and Violations of OSCE principles and  
Commitments**

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Mr Chair, it warrants cautious optimism that the ceasefire is largely holding. But recent incidents resulting in further casualties show that the situation on the ground remains fragile. Full respect of the ceasefire is necessary for a sustainable political settlement in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We therefore urge the parties to make full use of the opportunity created by the decrease in violence to move towards a sustainable political settlement of the conflict based on full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.

The European Union welcomes the progress achieved in implementing the first phase of the withdrawal agreement of 29 September. As the second phase of this process begins, we reiterate that any delay in the provision of baseline information and any restriction of SMM access risk undermining the process. We therefore urge all sides, in particular the Russia-backed separatists, to abide by the withdrawal agreement fully and without delay. This should be accompanied without any further delay by the full and unconditional withdrawal of all heavy weapons in accordance with the Minsk Package of Measures and subject to SMM verification. In this regard, we note with concern the large presence of heavy weapons in violation of withdrawal lines, particularly in separatist-controlled areas as reported by the SMM. We urge the Security Working Group to swiftly agree on concrete, immediate steps to this end.

We are concerned by the continued difficulties in setting up planned SMM Forward Patrol Bases in separatist-held areas. We call on the separatists to fully and immediately cooperate with the SMM to allow for the establishment of the planned Forward Patrol Bases. Likewise, SMM monitors and UAVs still face significant restrictions in large swaths of separatist-held areas, in particular north-east of

Mariupol and along the state border between Russia and Ukraine's Luhansk region. These obstructions are unacceptable and must cease at once. Full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine is critical in order for the SMM to fulfil its mandate.

We call on the Trilateral Contact Group and its relevant working groups to swiftly agree on the basic principles for much needed de-mining activities. De-mining is and must remain primarily the responsibility of the parties. Yet we stand ready to further support such efforts.

Mr Chair, the European Union remains firm in its call on all parties to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments. We underline the Russian authorities' responsibility in this regard. The ceasefire must be respected in full. We recall our concern about reports regarding continued presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia in separatist-controlled areas, including the presence of a Russian Zhytel jamming communication station and a Russian TOS-1 Buratino. All heavy weapons must be withdrawn and foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential. We again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists to meet their Minsk commitments in full. We recall that the duration of the EU economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.

On Sunday the 25<sup>th</sup> of October, millions of Ukrainians will cast their vote in the country's local elections. This is an important opportunity to further consolidate Ukraine's democratic development. It will be the third ODIHR-monitored election in Ukraine in 17 months. Once again, the European Union has contributed with a significant number of election observers deployed to the ODIHR mission. We once again urge the Political Working Group to continue to work for early agreement on modalities for local elections in certain parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, relevant OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR, as agreed at the Paris summit of the Normandy-four leaders on 2 October.

We welcome the recent thematic report of the SMM on “National Minorities in Western Ukraine”, and we encourage the Ukrainian authorities to take into account the observations of this report. The rights of persons belonging to national minorities need to be fully ensured in line with the relevant international standards, including those of the OSCE and the Council of Europe. We support the commitment of the Government of Ukraine in this regard.

Mr Chair, the European Union 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, to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilise the situation and to 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\*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member 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.

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