



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1180
Vienna, 22 March 2018**

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

Mr. Chairperson, the level of ceasefire violations fluctuates but the overall situation on the ground remains highly volatile compounded by continued ceasefire violations inside disengagement areas and lack of withdrawal of heavy weapons.

During last week, the SMM observed, just to mention a few, surface-to-air missile system and multiple launch rocket systems in government-controlled areas beyond the respective withdrawal lines and tanks in firing position in areas held by Russia-backed separatists. We strongly urge the sides to implement what they have agreed to in the Trilateral Contact Group and we reiterate our call for full disengagement and respect for the ceasefire.

The EU remains concerned that the movement of the SMM continues to be restricted. Such restrictions continue to occur primarily in areas not controlled by the Government. On 12 March at a so-called “DPR” checkpoint in non-government-controlled Kozatske, an armed man prevented the SMM from proceeding saying that there were minefields along a road leading to Porokhnia. This is the same checkpoint where an armed man had previously threatened the SMM with an assault rifle. On the same day, a member of the so-called “LPR” near non-government controlled Voznesenivka, told the SMM to leave the area while another armed so-called “LPR”-member on 16 March at a border crossing point near Sievernyi, demanded that the SMM leave the area, adding that it should not get closer than 200m to the crossing point. These restrictions are unacceptable. We remind all participating States that they have endorsed the SMM’s mandate and we call on Russia to use their considerable influence over the separatists it backs to put an end to such restrictions.

We reiterate our call for safe, secure and unhindered access for the SMM monitors and its technical equipment throughout Ukraine including along the Ukrainian-Russian border and on the Crimean peninsula.

Last week we voiced our concern over the repeated incidents near the Donetsk Filtration Station, which supplies water to almost 350,000 people on both sides of the line of contact. Because of the targeting of buses transporting employees from the Voda Donbassa water company, the SMM has assisted in facilitation access for these employees to and from the Filtration Station. While present this week near the station, the SMM again heard ceasefire violations. We strongly condemn any shelling of civilian infrastructure, which can lead to severe humanitarian and environmental consequences.

Also with this in mind, we reiterate our call for the Russian Federation to return to the JCCC, calling also on Russia and Ukraine to re-establish the functionality of the JCCC and to strengthen cooperation within its framework.

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. Respect for these must be restored. 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 stabilising the situation and reversing 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. We do not recognise the holding in the Crimean peninsula of elections by the Russian Federation, as this is Ukrainian territory. 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 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.