



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N°1090
Vienna, 18 February 2016**

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

A year ago this week, a full and immediate ceasefire should have entered into force as stipulated by the Minsk Package of Measures. Today, we continue to witness the opposite: a deeply worrying deterioration along the line of contact with casualties on the rise. Increasingly, heavy weapons are being removed from storage and put to use. We concur with the OSCE Secretary General that the situation in the region is at its worst point since last September's lull in fighting. It is essential to reverse this worrying development. We join the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Foreign Minister Steinmeier, following the Normandy Format meeting on 13 February 2016, in stressing the need to fully implement the Minsk agreements. As a first step, we urge all sides to honour their commitments and fully implement a sustainable ceasefire in order to move towards a sustainable political settlement in line with OSCE commitments and principles.

We reiterate our call on all sides to unconditionally and verifiably withdraw all weapons covered by the Minsk Package of Measures and the Addendum and to fully cooperate with the SMM to this end. We are concerned by the increased concentration of heavy weapons in hot spots near the line of contact. We condemn the deployment of heavy weapons at civilian sites, as reported by the SMM. We express our deep concern at the presence of mines and unexploded ordnance, including Uragan rockets near a school and in a kindergarten playground in separatist-held Debaltseve, as reported by the SMM on February 12.

The majority of the restrictions on the SMM's freedom of movement are the responsibility of separatists, significantly impeding the implementation of the Minsk agreements and severely obstructing the SMM's work. In the past week, the SMM has reported further instances, particularly in areas held by Russia-backed

separatists, including an SMM UAV being fired upon and SMM's patrols being threatened and forced at gunpoint to turn around. Such behaviour is unacceptable and all restrictions on the SMM's access and security must be lifted without further delay. Full, safe and unhindered access, including along the Ukrainian-Russian state border, is crucial for the SMM to fulfil its mandate. We reiterate that the SMM's mandate covers the whole of Ukraine, including Crimea.

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 Russia's responsibility in this regard and once again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet their commitments. We recall that the duration of the EU economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements. The ceasefire must be respected. All heavy weapons must be withdrawn and foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries removed from Ukraine. Full Ukrainian control over its state border must be reinstated. We reiterate our concern about reports regarding the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia.

The participants in the Political Working Group of the Trilateral Contact Group should conclude without delay their dialogue on the modalities of local elections in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, relevant OSCE standards and to be monitored by ODIHR. Established conditions for ODIHR observation must be met, including ensuring security and access for ODIHR.

Mr Chairman, we remain deeply concerned about the human rights situation in the Russian annexed Crimean peninsula. We condemn recent acts of persecution and intimidation of the Crimean Tatar community, including the attempt of de facto authorities to ban the Crimean Tatars' self-governing body, the Mejlis. In this context, we reiterate our call on all parties to provide the High Commissioner on National Minorities and ODIHR, and international human rights actors with full, free and unrestricted access to the whole territory of Ukraine, including Crimea and Sevastopol.

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* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members 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.