



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council N°1097  
Vienna, 21 April 2016**

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**EU Statement in response to ‘Russia’s Ongoing Aggression  
against Ukraine and Illegal Occupation of Crimea’ raised by  
Ukraine**

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The European Union condemns the further serious destabilisation along the line of contact. Between 4 and 10 April, the SMM observed at least three times as many Minsk-regulated weapons in violation of respective withdrawal lines than in the previous week. We are concerned by the continued and significantly increased restrictions on the SMMs freedom of movement, particularly in separatist-held areas. On 15 April, the SMM observed more than 4000 ceasefire violations in Donetsk alone. Violence intensified in Luhansk the following day. Fighting appears to be steadily increasing with greater use of higher calibre weapons. We therefore call for effective and immediate steps to de-escalate the situation and ensure a strict observance of the ceasefire. All sides must unconditionally and verifiably withdraw all Minsk-regulated weapons and ensure full, safe and unhindered access for the SMM without further delay. These are necessary steps in order to move towards a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

In recent weeks, about 85% of the reported restrictions on the SMM’s freedom of movement occurred in areas held by Russian-backed separatists. In recent days the SMM were again threatened by armed men in separatist-held areas. This is in stark contrast to the repeated assurances of full cooperation with the SMM. Implementation of the Minsk agreements requires full, safe and unhindered access for the SMM access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State Border. To this end, the JCCC’s support to the SMM remains wanting. They should be assisting the SMM in gaining full access to the border area rather than advising against it. All restrictions on the SMM must be lifted without further delay.

Moreover, the necessary security guarantees must be extended to the SMM immediately to enable the establishment of proposed forward patrol bases and hubs near the separatist-held parts of the Ukrainian-Russian State border. We also again call on the sides to hold accountable the perpetrators of all serious cases of intimidation of SMM monitors and regret that the JCCC has yet to ensure adequate follow-up.

We remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments. In this regard, we underline Russia's responsibility and also yet again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet those commitments in full. We also again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists. The duration of the European Union's economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements. The ceasefire must be respected. All Minsk-regulated 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 reiterate our deep concern about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in separatist-held areas.

The European Union reiterates its condemnation of the decision taken by the Russian Federation to suspend the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatars and ban all its activities. The recent placing by the Russian Ministry of Justice of the Mejlis on the list of religious organisations suspended on account of so-called extremist activities further adds to our concern. This decision constitutes a further serious repressive step against the rights of Crimean Tatars, a minority that should be protected, not prosecuted.

We also note with concern the comments made this week by the Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatović about the intimidation of journalist Nikolay Semena in Crimea, Ukraine. In the early hours of 19 April Semena's apartment in Simferopol was searched and his equipment seized. He was released after several hours of interrogation, and is now reportedly subject to a travel ban. Similar

intimidating actions took place on the same day against a number of other journalists. The arbitrary practise of silencing journalists in Crimea must stop.

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.