



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1182
Vienna, 19 April 2018**

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

It is with regret that I must begin this statement by talking about the five civilians who were injured yesterday at the Donetsk Water Filtration Station, and it is a deep shame that this sad event does not come as a shock. Despite repeated calls on all sides to immediately cease fighting, particularly around areas close to civilians and civilian infrastructure, this is the fourth recorded instance of workers at the station being subject to shelling over the past week. It is unacceptable that this fighting continues, with scant regard to the innocent civilians facing such dangers, not to mention the huge, and wide reaching dangers if a chlorine tank is hit. We once more call again on all sides to halt fighting and withdraw their troops and equipment from key civilian infrastructure.

Mr. Chairperson, We regret that the latest recommitment to ceasefire has not led to a significant and permanent halt to the fighting. The above incident is a clear reminder that civilians living and working close to the line of contact are the ones who continue to suffer the most. They cannot live in peace for fear of damage to their homes and risk to their lives. We condemn in particular the mortar shelling of Donetsk City on 11 April which resulted in numerous civilian casualties. We urgently call on all sides to protect civilians and critical civilian infrastructure in accordance with international obligations.

Impediments to the SMM’s freedom of movement must stop. They seriously threaten our monitors’ security and obstruct the fulfilment of their important mandate, as shown by recent incidents: on 13 April in Uzhivka, an area held by Russia-backed separatists, men in military-style clothing fired warning shots into the air when they saw the SMM. On the same day, at the border crossing point near non-government controlled Voznesenivka, the SMM was told to leave the area immediately by another

man in military-style clothing who claimed the area was restricted and at the nearby Chervona Mohyla railway station, the SMM was told to leave by two men in military-style clothing, threatening to “unleash the guard dog” the next time the SMM would be in the area. Such impediments to the SMM’s freedom of movement are blatant violations of the SMM mandate, which all participating states have endorsed and we reiterate our call for safe, secure and unhindered access for the SMM monitors and its technical equipment throughout Ukraine. This includes on the Crimean peninsula and along the Ukrainian-Russian border. We call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to put an end to any restrictions.

We deplore that the SMM’s UAVs continue to be targeted, either by small arms fire or jamming. On 15 April on the edge of the Petrivske disengagement area, the SMM lost contact with one of its mid-range UAVs less than a minute after its take-off. While trying to establish the UAV’s location, shots were fired only a few hundred metres from the SMM forcing the monitors to leave immediately. The UAV has not been recovered. We call on the sides to respect the Minsk agreements. The operational, security and financial consequences of these obstructions must be assessed and the parties responsible for any damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs should be held accountable, including financially.

At a checkpoint near government-controlled Trokhizbenka, a soldier from the Ukrainian Armed Forces prevented the SMM from proceeding on 13 April. However, after informing the JCCC, the SMM was able to pass the checkpoint later in the day. This underscores the importance of a well-functioning JCCC and 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.

The conflict in eastern Ukraine continues to pose severe humanitarian and environmental threats to civilians. We are extremely concerned about the alleged plans to flood the Yunkom mine in non-government controlled Bunhe, 43km north-east of Donetsk. Flooding of the mine risks contaminating the water table and water basin with radiological waste which could lead to an environmental and humanitarian disaster.

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 EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA 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.