



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1248 Vienna, 21 November 2019

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

Mr. Chairperson, we welcome the announcement of the date of the next leaders' summit within the Normandy format. We hope that this meeting will result in concrete measures aimed at putting an end to the violence and to further ease the suffering of civilians and thus has the potential to constitute an important step in the peaceful resolution of the conflict, in full respect of Ukrainian sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. This is only possible if there is strong political will on both sides. In this regard, we commend the Ukrainian leadership for its unwavering commitment to peaceful conflict resolution and call on Russia to act likewise.

We are encouraged by the progress in the three disengagement areas and we commend Ukraine for the renovation of the bridge near Stanytsia Luhanska which will greatly facilitate the passage through the contact line for the civilian population, especially the elderly who suffer most from the current circumstances.

We note the return by Russia earlier this week of the three Ukrainian vessels seized in the Black Sea almost a year ago in an act of unjustified use of force near the Kerch Strait. These vessels should have never been seized in the first place. Their return was long overdue, in particular in the light of the binding order of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. We remain consistent and persistent in our calls on Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage to and from the Sea of Azov in accordance with international law.

Regretfully, these positive steps are yet to translate into improved conditions for most people living along the contact line. The numbers of ceasefire violations continue to rise, civilian infrastructure and residential areas are being shelled while the work of the SMM continues to be impeded predominantly in non-government-controlled areas, which the EU strongly deplores. The SMM must have safe, secure, unconditional and unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine. This includes the illegally annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and along the Ukraine-Russia state border, to which the SMM is systematically denied access by Russia-backed armed formations. We once again deplore targeting of SMM assets, including SMM UAVs, by means of signal interference and small arms fire. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

We regret that Russia continues the so-called "humanitarian convoys", apparently now on a regular basis every Thursday, some of them entering military compounds, in clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as of fundamental international humanitarian principles. We once again call on Russia to join an international mechanism for the delivery of humanitarian aid and to desist from its current practice, which is incompatible with basic principles of international law.

We reiterate our utmost concern about the Russian presidential decrees and their extensions, enabling the simplified granting of Russian citizenship to Ukrainian citizens, which constitutes yet another attack on the sovereignty of Ukraine and runs counter to the spirit and objectives of the Minsk agreements. We do not recognise these passports issued on the basis of these decrees and we call on other OSCE participating States to do likewise.

The EU remains firm in its 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 to the conflict in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility in this regard and to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. We again call on Russia to immediately stop fuelling the conflict by providing financial and military support to the armed formations, and we remain deeply concerned about the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations. 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 uphold 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 strongly condemn the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces since February 2014 and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, which we will not recognise. The European Union will remain committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and 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.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.