



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1218 Vienna, 28 February 2019

EU Statement on Five Years of Illegal Annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation

Five years ago, Russia violated Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity by illegally annexing the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol in clear violation of international rules, principles and commitments. The EU remains firmly committed to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and steadfast in its condemnation of this act. We do not and will not recognise it.

The Russian Federation covertly used its military to seize Ukrainian territory by force and then attempted to give its actions a veneer of legitimacy with an illegal referendum. This referendum violated the Ukrainian constitution, Ukrainian media was shut down so that pro-Russian propaganda could dominate, the vote was prepared in less than 20 days in a heavily militarised environment of intimidation, and no credible election observers were present to assess the referendum.

Russia's actions in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City Sevastopol were a violation of international law, which remains a direct threat to international security, with grave implications for the international legal order that protects the unity and sovereignty of all states. It also contradicts Russia's commitments under the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter which lay down the normative foundation of the European security order. We condemn all initiatives undertaken by Russia over the past year of forced integration of the illegally annexed Crimea including the construction of the Kerch bridge which took place without Ukraine's consent and constitutes another violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The situation on the Crimean peninsula is of grave concern. In violation of its mandate, SMM is prevented from accessing the Crimean peninsula. However, numerous credible reports underline that the human rights situation on the Crimean peninsula has been deteriorating. Over the past five years, people living on the peninsula experienced severe restrictions to their fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, religion or belief and association and the right to peaceful assembly. Political opposition in Crimea has been stifled and persecuted, civil society curbed, journalists silenced and the rights of persons belonging to different communities are suppressed. During a side-event earlier this week we heard moving testimonies of civil society representatives, lawyers and relatives of those persecuted and illegally detained under unacceptable conditions and without access to medical care, including from the daughter of Edem Bekirov, which offered an insight of dire human rights situation.

Representatives of the Crimean Tatar community and its self-governing body, the Mejlis, face systematic persecution in the form of threats, harassment and intimidation as well as unlawful searches of their homes and enforced disappearances. Their situation worsened considerably following Russia's decision to list the Mejlis as an extremist organization, completely banning its operations on 26 April 2016.

The EU calls for full compliance with international human rights standards in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. All pending cases of human rights violations and abuses, such as enforced disappearances, torture and killings should be thoroughly investigated and those responsible brought to justice. International human rights monitoring missions and human rights non-governmental organisations must have access to Crimea, in line with relevant UN resolutions.

We recall our unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders and we will remain committed to full implementation of our non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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