



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1177
Vienna, 1 March 2018**

**EU Statement on Four years of illegal annexation of the
Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol
by the Russian Federation**

It has been four years since Russia's illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. The EU remains steadfast in its condemnation of this act which violates international rules and principles. We do not and will not recognise it. The EU remains firmly committed to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Russian Federation covertly sent its military to seize Ukrainian territory by force and then attempted to give its actions a veneer of legitimacy with an illegal referendum. It 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.

We reiterate that we do not recognise and continue to condemn this 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 remain gravely concerned about the situation on the Crimean peninsula where human rights violations are widespread. Over the past four years, people living on the peninsula have been faced with 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. We are concerned by media reports of increased searches by de facto authorities of the Ukrainian Cultural Centre in Simferopol.

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.

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 access to the peninsula remains limited and the SMM continues to be prevented from observing there despite being mandated to do so. We reiterate our call for full, free and unhindered access to the whole territory of Ukraine for international observers.

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 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, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

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