



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1185
Vienna, 10 May 2018**

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

Mr. Chairperson, ceasefire violations continue around critical civilian infrastructure, notably the Donetsk Water Filtration Station (DWFS), putting civilians at grave risk. We strongly urge the sides to abide by their commitments and take concrete steps to create safety zones around essential civilian infrastructure. The continued operation of the DWFS is of crucial importance for the hundreds of thousands of civilians living along the contact line to whom the station supplies water. Keeping in mind the central role of the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination in securing repair to civilian infrastructure, we reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to return to the JCCC and on Russia and Ukraine to re-establish the functionality of the JCCC and to strengthen cooperation within its framework.

When the mobile telephone network in Donetsk and Luhansk regions was shut down earlier this year, it added yet more anguish to the lives of civilians. We therefore welcome the news that the Trilateral Contact Group, which met on 4 May, with the support of the SMM, has managed to facilitate the restoration of the Vodafone-Ukraine mobile communication in certain areas of Donetsk region, in addition to the earlier restoration in certain parts of Luhansk region. This is a very important achievement for the struggling population in eastern Ukraine.

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 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 also call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it

backs to put an end to any restrictions hindering the SMM in carrying out its work according to its mandate.

We condemn any violation of the SMM mandate, which clearly states that the monitors and their technical equipment should have safe, secure and unhindered access throughout Ukraine. This includes the Crimean peninsula and along the Ukrainian-Russian border. In order to strengthen the access of the SMM to the border areas we strongly urge those in effective control of the territory to give the necessary security guarantees which could allow for opening of new forward patrol bases. Access for the SMM monitors is violated on a daily basis primarily in areas held by Russian-backed separatists. The presence of mines - new and old ones - obstructs the SMM's access to certain areas and poses a severe risk to the SMM monitors as well as civilians. Those responsible for obstructing the SMM's work should be identified and held accountable. We strongly urge all sides to refrain from laying new mines and to mark, fence and clear existing mines.

We are appalled that within the first four months of 2018 SMM UAVs have been targeted with small-arms fire 19 times, compared with 20 times throughout all of 2017. Jamming and targeting of SMM UAVs must stop immediately. 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 politically and financially.

The SMM has observed an increase in heavy weapons in violation of withdrawal lines and ceasefire violations inside all three disengagement areas. We reiterate our call on the sides to implement what they have agreed to in the Trilateral Contact Group, disengage and withdraw heavy weapons.

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.

We remain gravely concerned about the situation on the Crimean peninsula where human rights violations are widespread. Since Russia's illegal annexation, severe restrictions on fundamental freedoms on the Crimean peninsula have been imposed.

On 4 May, Crimean activist Ihor Movenko was found guilty of extremism and sentenced to two years in prison by a Russia-controlled court in Sevastopol for having posted pro-Ukrainian comments on social media. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the systematic persecution of human rights activists in the Crimean peninsula. It is a gross violation of human rights and we call once again upon the Russian Federation to stop such persecutions and to immediately release all persons arrested and charged for expressing dissenting views, including regarding the status of Crimea, on the Crimean peninsula and in Russia.

On 8 May yet another so-called “humanitarian convoy” from Russia was observed entering into Ukrainian territory at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point. This was the 74th of its kind. Mr. Chairperson, the presence of these so-called “humanitarian convoys” occurs without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities and in clear violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and without fundamental international humanitarian principles being observed. The Minsk agreements stipulate that humanitarian aid will be delivered through an international mechanism. An agreement on this in the humanitarian working group remains crucial.

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. 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 UKRAINE, 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.