



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1187
Vienna, 31 May 2018**

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

Mr. Chairperson, on 22 May, a 14 year old boy lost his life while two other boys and a girl were wounded, when what is believed to be an UXO exploded inside a bus in non-government controlled Debaltseve. The incident demonstrates in the most tragic way the devastating toll the conflict continues to have on the lives of innocent civilians on both sides of the contact line, which we deplore. Regrettably we are seeing an increase in ceasefire violations and lack of disengagement. The SMM is observing new trenches and fighting vehicles inside the disengagement areas, as well as ceasefire violations inside all three disengagement areas. On 22 May an ICRC aid station inside the Stanytsia Luhanska disengagement area was damaged. Between 15 and 20 May, weapons that should have been withdrawn according to the Minsk agreements, were fired on over 1200 occasions which is a fivefold increase compared to the week before. This lack of implementation leads to a highly unpredictable, volatile and dangerous situation on the ground and we urge the sides to disengage, respect the ceasefire and start comprehensive de-mining.

Despite repeated calls by the EU and others and in blatant disregard of guarantees given in the TCG, indiscriminate shelling has continued around the Donetsk Filtration Station, which ultimately forced the station to close down on 18 May after the electric supply was damaged by shelling. We commend the SMM and Voda Donbassa employees for managing to reestablish the supply despite continued shelling. Safety zones around the DFS and other essential civilian infrastructure sites must be established immediately. Bearing in mind also the role played by the JCCC in connection with repair of civilian infrastructure, we repeat 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.

We remain profoundly concerned for the safety of our monitors. More than once since the last PC SMM patrols have been forced to leave their positions due to explosions and small arms fire only few hundred meters from them. Just yesterday an SMM patrol was forced to leave their position just outside the Petrivske disengagement area following an explosion less than 300 meters away from their position. These incidents happen despite the SMM obtaining security guarantees in advance and assuring that their positions are well-known to all. We strongly condemn any targeting of the SMM monitors or its equipment. Safe, secure and unhindered access for the SMM monitors and their technical equipment must be ensured throughout Ukraine including along the Ukrainian-Russian border and the Crimean peninsula.

Mr. Chairperson, other impediments to the freedom of movement and action of the SMM continue to take place, particularly in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations who repeatedly deny the SMM access. On 19 May, while conducting a long-range UAV flight near the DFS, the SMM heard uncountable shots of small-arms fire assessed as directed at the UAV. Furthermore, a Mini-UAV was shot down on 21 May near non-government controlled Vesela Hora. We reiterate our call on the sides to stop jamming and targeting SMM UAVs. 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. We thank the deputy chief monitor for having included this concern in his latest security briefing to participating States in Vienna.

On 14 May 2018, Oleg Sentsov, a film director deported to eastern Siberia, began a hunger strike after four years of imprisonment. Another illegally-detained Ukrainian citizen, Mr Volodymyr Balukh, has also recently spent two months on hunger strike. They have opposed the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula and were sentenced, by courts whose jurisdiction the EU does not recognise, in breach of international law and elementary standards of justice. Adding to the extremely worrying number of Crimean Tatars who have been persecuted and had their rights gravely violated, activists Server Mustafayev and Edem Smailov were also detained on 21 May 2018. The European Union expects international human rights standards

on the peninsula to be upheld and all illegally detained Ukrainian citizens in Russia and on the Crimean peninsula to be released without delay.

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 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. 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*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE 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.