



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1181
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**EU statement on “Russia’s Ongoing Aggression against
Ukraine and Illegal Occupation of Crimea”**

Mr. Chairperson, we commend Ambassador Sajdik and his team in the TCG for once again getting the sides to recommit to the ceasefire. It took effect on 30 March and we welcome the subsequent reduction in ceasefire violations, especially the respite that this has afforded to civilians living close to the line of contact. However, we regret that despite this reduction, it was not possible to achieve a comprehensive ceasefire during Easter. We call on all sides to implement their commitments on demining, disengagement of forces and hardware, and protection of infrastructure, which are necessary to ensure a successful ceasefire implementation.

Over the last two weeks we have observed with grave concern that our monitors have been threatened, their UAVs targeted and jammed, and heavy weapons remain positioned in violation of withdrawal lines adding to the overall volatility. The interference with the SMM’s technical equipment takes place despite the letter sent by the CiO, the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs H. E. Mr. Alfano, and the OSCE Secretary General to the Normandy Four last month asking them for their political support to ensure full respect for the provisions of the Minsk agreements including unimpeded access and protection of all SMM UAVs. Regrettably, the sides have continued to obstruct UAV monitoring by shooting in their close vicinity, preventing their flying altogether and jamming them while flying. Since 28 of March, 6 out of 9 long-range UAV flights have been jammed and thus been prevented from monitoring. 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 financially.

On 5 April while conducting UAV monitoring east of Kreminets, an area held by Russia-backed separatists, the SMM patrol was approached by armed men speaking

to them in an aggressive manner. The SMM heard one of them say “get ready” to the other in Russian, who then charged his weapon, keeping his finger on the trigger and pointing the barrel of the gun at the ground. Such threats directed towards our monitors should stop immediately.

On 4 April, while flying a mini-UAV over the Western edge of government controlled Novoselivka, the SMM heard shots assessed as directed at the UAV forcing the SMM to recall the UAV. Also on 4 April while flying an SMM mini-UAV over an area north-west of Shevchenko, Ukrainian Armed Forces soldiers told the SMM not to fly the UAV over the area also claiming that it was a “no-flight zone.” A few minutes later, the SMM heard small-arms fire assessed as directed at the UAV again forcing the SMM to recall its UAV and leave the area.

We are extremely concerned about these blatant violations of the SMM mandate, which all participating States have endorsed. We reiterate our call for safe, secure and unhindered access for the SMM monitors and its technical equipment throughout Ukraine. This includes on the Crimean peninsula and along the Ukrainian-Russian border, where Russia-backed separatists, for the sixth consecutive week, denied the SMM access. As in previous weeks, armed men cited “instructions” from their “superiors” when telling the SMM to leave the area. All these impediments are unacceptable and we call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to put an end to such restrictions and intimidation. Accountability must be ensured.

It continues to be necessary for the SMM to facilitate access of Voda Donbassa water company employees to and from the Donetsk Filtration Station to keep the station operational. In this vein and bearing in mind the role that the JCCC plays with regard to securing local safety zones around essential civilian infrastructure, we reiterate our call for the Russian Federation to return to the JCCC, calling also on Russia and Ukraine to re-establish the functionality of the JCCC and to strengthen cooperation within its framework.

Mr. Chairperson, on 29 March yet another so-called “humanitarian convoy” from Russia was observed entering into Ukrainian territory at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point. This was the 73rd of its kind. 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. In addition, the SMM was prevented from observing the unloading of the trucks of the convoy as reported by the SMM. The Minsk agreements foresee that humanitarian aid will be delivered through an international mechanism. An agreement on this in the humanitarian working group remains crucial.

We remain firm in our 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 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. We do not recognise the holding in the Crimean peninsula of elections by the Russian Federation, as this is Ukrainian territory. 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 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 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.