



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1068 Vienna, 17 September 2015

EU Statement on Russia's Ongoing Aggression against Ukraine and Violations of OSCE principles and Commitments

The European Union welcomes the recent relative calm along the so-called 'contact line' as reported by the Special Monitoring Mission. This warrants cautious optimism, but the security situation remains fragile. All sides must now take concrete steps towards consolidating a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire.

We once again reiterate our strong support for the work of the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group in their efforts to achieve a politically sustainable solution with full respect for OSCE principles and commitments. We welcome the headway achieved at the meeting in the Normandy Format on the level of Foreign Ministers on 12 September and call on the Trilateral Contact Group and its subordinate working groups to follow up on the agreed outcomes. Specifically, an agreement on the withdrawal of armoured vehicles and of tanks, smaller artillery systems and mortars, to be verified by the SMM, should be finalised and implemented as quickly as possible. Furthermore, we strongly urge all sides to implement the agreement of the Foreign Ministers that no more landmines should be laid and that efforts to clear mines should now begin. Further progress will also be crucial in the political working group, notably on the issue of the holding of local elections in accordance with Ukrainian legislation and relevant OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. We welcome the presence of an ODIHR expert at Tuesday's meeting of the group.

We stand firm in our call on all parties to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full. The ceasefire must be fully respected, heavy weapons withdrawn and foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries removed from Ukraine. We underline the Russian authorities' responsibility in this regard. We note with concern the reports about the

continued presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia in separatist-controlled areas. The duration of the EU economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The SMM has a vital role in supporting efforts to consolidate the recent progress on the ground, including in monitoring and verifying the withdrawal of weapons. But the mission continues to be obstructed by significant restrictions in its monitoring, in particular in large parts of territory held by Russia-backed separatists, notably along the border with Russia. This is unacceptable and runs counter to repeated assurances that the SMM will have free and unhindered access, most recently given at the Normandy meeting. We regret that, due to the apparent shooting down of an SMM UAV over separatist-controlled territory, as well as persistent jamming, the SMM's UAVs are once again unable to contribute to monitoring at a critical time.

We support the swift launch and completion of projects on reconstruction, including on water supply, as discussed in the economic working group. We remain deeply concerned by the continued lack of full and safe humanitarian access, in particular to separatist-controlled areas. As reported by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the window for efforts to prepare for winter is closing fast. This bears repeating: The window is closing fast. Meanwhile, humanitarian organisations face significant obstacles in their effort to transport, store and ensure sufficient supplies to help thousands of people in separatist-controlled areas endure the coming winter. We welcome the clear commitment of the Foreign Ministers of the Normandy Format to ensure that humanitarian actors are granted full access to people in the affected areas. We call on the humanitarian working group to swiftly agree on concrete steps to this end. We recall that the EU and its Member States have scaled up their assistance to meet the needs of the population of Ukraine in regions suffering from the consequences of the crisis. The EU and its Member States have jointly contributed over €241 million in humanitarian and early recovery aid since the beginning of the crisis. €119 million of these have been provided in humanitarian aid only.

Mr Chairman, the EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, 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 stabilise the situation and reverse moves that contravene these principles. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and we will not recognise it. In this context, we wish to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the recent prolongation of EU restrictive measures targeting actions against Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence. The asset freeze and travel bans against 149 persons and 37 entities have been extended until 15 March 2016.

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 country NORWAY, member 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.