



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1156  
Vienna, 31 August 2017**

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**EU statement on “Russia’s Ongoing Aggression Against  
Ukraine and Illegal Annexation of Crimea”**

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We welcome the recommitment to a ceasefire on the occasion of the beginning of the school year reached by the Trilateral Contact Group on August 23 following the related political support expressed in the phone call of the Normandy four on August 22. During August 25, the first day of the renewed ceasefire, the SMM did record half the number of ceasefire violations in both Donetsk and Luhansk compared to the previous 24 hours. However, the day before, the SMM had recorded a significant increase in explosions, hence the actual reduction in violations is limited. The EU strongly condemns these continued violations and call on all sides to ensure full implementation of the ceasefire on the ground.

In light of the renewed cease-fire, we once again call on all sides to assure safe, unhindered SMM access – including along the Ukrainian-Russian border – recalling that the SMM needs access in order to verify that those who have made promises also make good on them as prescribed in their mandate. We also call on all sides to take immediate steps to ensure the withdrawal of all Minsk-proscribed weapons and full humanitarian access in line with international humanitarian principles. These are important steps toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these fundamental principles must be restored.

Following the frequent incidents throughout the month of August, including threats levelled at the SMM, we again condemn the intimidation and restrictions of the SMM and the repeated hampering of technical equipment, which continue to occur primarily in areas held by Russia backed separatists. For example, in addition to standing restrictions related to disengagement areas and/ or the

presence of mines, from July 31 to August 20, the SMM's freedom of movement was restricted as many as 47 times all of which happened in separatist-held areas. Notably, on August 13 on the bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska, a man in military- style clothing pointed his assault rifle at SMM patrol members – who were monitoring the situation on the bridge at the time- and threatened to shoot if they did not leave the area in three seconds. This is a severe threat that grossly violates the agreed presence of the SMM as stipulated in their mandate. As well as gross intimidation, the SMM has also been subject to interference with its technical equipment, some of which was damaged beyond repair. On August 1, an SMM convoy carrying camera equipment and driver was held for more than seven hours near Olenivka despite the mission's prior request that the JCCC facilitate the passage.

It is high time that those responsible are brought to justice and we urge Russia to exercise its influence over the separatists it backs to put an end to the restrictions and intimidation. Assurances by the Russian delegation and in the Trilateral Contact Group that steps are being taken to ensure the safety of monitors in separatist-held areas is contradicted by the reality that monitors continue to face on the ground. The SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including to the Ukraine-Russia state border. We also underline yet again that the security of the SMM is the responsibility of those in effective control of the area in which the SMM operates. Without proper and unimpeded monitoring by the SMM, there cannot be a verified improvement of the security situation, which is the basis for further progress on the political track of the peace process.

We regret that so-called “humanitarian convoys” from Russia continue to enter Ukrainian territory; the sixty-fifth and sixty-sixth of their kind passing through on 27 July and 24 August respectively. This 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 package foresees that humanitarian aid will be delivered through and international mechanism. An agreement on this in the humanitarian working group remains crucial.

We commend the Trilateral Contact Group on reaching agreement on recommitment to a ceasefire. It is an important step and it is essential that the all sides adhere to it on the ground. As stated by the Normandy 4 leaders on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August, we hope that this cease-fire will considerably improve the security situation, for the benefit of children and the whole population of Donbass. The Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups must further agree on steps toward the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. This includes the modalities of local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in full accordance with Ukrainian legislation, OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. We reiterate our firm position that established conditions for ODIHR monitoring, including ensuring security and access, must first be met.

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. 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 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. 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 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.