



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1310 Vienna, 22 April 2021

EU Statement in response to the Update by the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson in Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Heidi Grau, and to the Report by the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik

The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Heidi Grau and Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik to the Permanent Council and thanks them for their presentations.

Let me start by stating that Russia's ongoing unusual military build-up in the areas adjacent to the state border of Ukraine and in the illegally-annexed Crimean peninsula, as well as its decision to close certain areas of the Black Sea to foreign State-owned ships until October 2021, are of deep concern to us. We again urge Russia to re-engage in good faith in a meaningful dialogue and constructive consultations in line with the Vienna Document and to de-escalate the situation. In this regard, it is key to refrain from actions and rhetoric that lead to heightened tensions. We also urge Russia to provide full transparency on its military activities and to voluntarily host a visit to dispel concerns about these activities, in line with the recommendations put forward by participating States at last week's joint PC-FSC meeting.

Ambassador Çevik, while acknowledging that the numbers of ceasefire violations are still on significantly lower level than in the first quarter of 2020, we are deeply concerned about the worsening security situation in eastern Ukraine, given that the steady rise in ceasefire violations since November 2020 has gained speed in 2021. During the last weeks, there is also a growing number of casualties among civilians and Ukrainian military personnel. In these circumstances your work as the coordinator

for the TCG Security Working Group is very important and we hope to hear about positive outcomes of your discussions soon. In addition, recent months have shown that the establishment of a functioning coordination mechanism, as foreseen in the “additional measures” from July 2020, remains crucial. We also reiterate the important role of the SMM to facilitate dialogue between the sides and to verify violations. We would also like to express our gratitude for the SMM’s continued reporting on the human dimension as an important part of the OSCE’s comprehensive approach.

As the SMM should have safe and secure access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea, we deeply regret the restrictions on the SMM’s freedom of movement, as they violate the SMM’s mandate and significantly affect its operational posture. In your report, Ambassador Çevik, and in the last SMM thematic report, you note that 93% of the restrictions between 1 January and 20 March occurred in non-governmental controlled areas and half of them were cases when the Russia-backed armed formations prevented the SMM from crossing the contact line. In the past two weeks, we received almost daily reports on systematic denial of access to SMM patrols by the Russia-backed armed formations. We also regret that the Mission is almost completely prevented from moving between the non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions and accessing the State border areas outside government control. In addition, the SMM UAV’s are exposed to increased GPS signal interference and gunfire, which limit the SMM’s monitoring activities and put Mission members and technological assets at risk. We are also concerned about the installation of two camera-like objects on the mast of an SMM camera system in the non-government controlled area of Donetsk, without the SMM’s permission. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to make sure that all restrictions on the SMM’s freedom of movement are removed.

Dear Ambassadors, we commend your tireless efforts within the Trilateral Contact Group. However, we regret that the lack of political will from one participant continues to prevent any meaningful discussions. It is disappointing that Russia refuses to engage genuinely in discussions on a renewal of the ceasefire commitments and that, despite the readiness repeatedly shown by Ukraine, there is still no agreement on the implementation of the new disengagement areas, the 19 new demining zones or on the full operation of the Zolote and Shchastia crossing points. We urge Russia to assume its responsibility as a participant in the TCG and a party to the Minsk

agreements as well as the N4 commitments and implement the provisions it has committed itself to.

The European Union condemns all attempts to impose Russian laws and regulations upon the Crimean population and other non-government controlled areas of Ukraine. The widespread drafting of residents of the illegally-annexed Crimean peninsula into the Russian Armed Forces and the restriction of property rights in Crimea are examples of violations of international law. We are also deeply concerned about Russia's policy to issue passports in a simplified and selective manner to Ukrainian citizens of the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine as it contradicts the spirit and the objectives of the Minsk agreements. In addition, reports on statements attributed to high-level Russian officials evoking possible Russian military action as an alleged-need to protect the interests of these newly passportized citizens, are highly disturbing. We strongly refute such statements. The interests of the population living on both sides of the contact line are best safeguarded through an immediate stabilisation of the security situation and a peaceful settlement of the conflict in line with the Minsk agreements and OSCE principles and commitments.

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 to the conflict in line with the OSCE principles and commitments. We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility in this regard and to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. We again call on Russia to immediately stop fuelling the conflict by providing financial and military support to the armed formations, and we remain deeply concerned about the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations. The duration of the European Union's 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 uphold 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 strongly condemn the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces since February 2014 and the illegal

annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, which we will not recognise. The European Union will remain committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.