



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1246 Vienna, 7 November 2019

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

Mr. Chairman, we are encouraged by the progress achieved in Stanytsia Luhanska, including the well-advanced repair works on the bridge and the removal of the so-called blue container. We welcome the completed withdrawal of forces and hardware in Zolote and the start of demining activities in this area. We hope that the sides will, in the very near future, move forward with the renewed disengagement in Petrivske and call on all sides to ensure the necessary security conditions in this regard. Such steps would be another confidence building measure and ease the suffering of civilians living close to the contact line who bear the brunt of this conflict.

We deplore the fact that the security situation in the conflict areas continues to be highly volatile, as reported by the SMM. Again, two civilians were injured. On 24 October, during an agreed window of silence, a man suffered shrapnel injuries during repair works near non-government-controlled Pankivka. On 25 October, another man suffered shrapnel injuries in non-government-controlled Mineralne. Damage to civilian properties was also recorded, including a functioning school hit by small arms fire. We once again urge the sides to respect the ceasefire, in particular around critical civilian infrastructure, and increase their efforts to build up on the positive dynamics of the negotiations conducted within the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group in order to foster further progress on the implementation of the Minsk agreements. In this regard, we commend the Ukrainian leadership for its unwavering commitment to peaceful conflict resolution and call on Russia to act likewise and use its considerable influence

over the armed formations it backs to prevent undermining of the disengagement process.

Mr. Chairman, the SMM remains our source of reliable information of the situation on the ground. We highly value its regular and thematic reports. The safety and security of the SMM is of primary importance. The EU strongly deplores any attempts to harass, intimidate or impede the work of SMM personnel and condemns the continued threats and restrictions to the SMM, which occur predominantly in non-government controlled areas. This practice hampers the SMM from fulfilling its mandate. The SMM must have safe, secure, unconditional and unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine. This includes the illegally annexed Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and along the Ukraine-Russia state border, to which the SMM is systematically denied access by Russia-backed formations. We once again deplore targeting of SMM assets, including SMM UAVs, by means of signal interference and small arms fire. This was in particular often the case around the Petrivske disengagement area where on 21 October the Mission lost a mini-UAV soon after the UAV had experienced signal interference, and on 27 October shots were fired in the direction of an SMM mini-UAV. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

We reiterate our utmost concern about the Russian presidential decrees and their extensions, enabling the simplified granting of Russian citizenship to Ukrainian citizens, which constitutes yet another attack on the sovereignty of Ukraine and runs counter to the spirit and objectives of the Minsk agreements. We will not recognise the passports issued on the basis of those decrees and we call on other OSCE Participating States to do likewise.

We reiterate our position on the unjustified use of force by Russia near the Kerch Strait on 25 November 2018, its negative impact in the Black and Azov seas and Russia's violations of international law. We call on Russia to return to Ukraine's custody the three vessels seized in the Black Sea on 25 November last year, in accordance with the

binding order of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. We further call on Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage to and from the Sea of Azov, in accordance with international law. Respect for international court rulings is fundamental for an international rules-based order.

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 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 economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The EU commends the recent initiative of the Ukrainian government to organize an international investment forum “re:think. Invest in Ukraine” and the “Unity Forum”, at which President Zelensky called for a state strategy for the reintegration of Donbas and Crimea, which were held in the strategic Azov port city of Mariupol, close to the line of contact on 29 and 30 October.

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, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as 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.