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**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1179  
Vienna, 15 March 2018**

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

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Mr. Chairperson,

While the SMM has observed a slight reduction in ceasefire violations following the recent recommitment to ceasefire, the sides are far from assuring a full and comprehensive ceasefire and the security situation along the line of contact remains highly volatile. As we have stated repeatedly, the ongoing fighting infringes on the lives of the civilian population. During the 26 February 4 March reporting period the SMM recorded fresh damage from shelling to civilian property on both sides of the contact line. Women, men and children living in these houses reported to the SMM that they were in their houses when the shelling happened once again underlining that it is the civilians that are suffering the most from this conflict. We are extremely worried about the repeated incidents near the Donetsk Filtration Station where trucks and buses transporting employees of the Voda Donbasa Company have been fired upon. The Water Filtration Station supplies water to almost 350,000 people on both sides of the line of contact.

We strongly urge the sides to translate their words into action on the ground and implement what they have agreed to the TCG. 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 fundamental principles 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.

Lack of implementation of the Minsk agreements puts essential civilian infrastructure at risk of shelling which can lead to humanitarian and environmental disasters.

During the 26 February - 4 March reporting period, the SMM observed fresh craters near a natural gas distribution warehouse in government-controlled Pidlisne as well as close to a power substation in non-government controlled Zolote. In the substation there are toxic chemicals such as mercury and trichloroethylene and shelling in such close vicinity could lead to a grave environmental disaster. We call on the TCG and its working groups to agree on steps towards establishing safety zones around additional essential civilian infrastructure and appropriate measures to mitigate environmental risks in the conflict area e.g. also in flooded coalmines.

In this vein and bearing in mind that one of the roles of the JCCC is to facilitate repair to essential civilian infrastructure we reiterate our call on 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, all participating States have endorsed the SMM's mandate but the Mission continues to encounter impediments to fulfilment of its mandate primarily in areas held by Russia-backed separatists. In Luhansk region the SMM is regularly being denied access at Izvaryne, Sievernyi, Voznesenivka and Dozhanske border crossing points by members of the so-called "LPR". On 9 March, while the SMM was attempting to visit a border crossing point near Izvaryne, a member of the so-called "LPR" told the SMM after only two minutes, to leave the area, citing orders from his superiors. In Donetsk region the so-called "DPR" has denied access to the town of Siedove near the border with the Russian Federation since April 2017.

Furthermore an SMM mini-UAV was again subject to small arms fire over non-government controlled areas, in the vicinity of Ternove on 10 March. We reiterate our call for safe, secure and unhindered access for the SMM monitors and its technical equipment throughout Ukraine including along the Ukrainian-Russian border and on the Crimean peninsula. We urge Russia to exercise its influence over the separatists it backs to put an end to the restrictions. 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

As also underlined by High Representative / Vice-President Federica Mogherini, during her recent visit to Kyiv, 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 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.