



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N°1101
Vienna, 26 May 2016**

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

The overall security situation along the line of contact remains unpredictable and very tense. The 23rd of May was the deadliest day in 2016 for the Ukrainian armed forces, with seven soldiers killed and nine wounded. Despite the renewed commitment to the ceasefire on 29 April and the decrease in ceasefire violations observed since then, violations, including with heavy weapons, continue on a daily basis, causing further casualties. Military formations on either side remain close, increasing the risk of escalation. Between 9 and 15 May, only about a third of the heavy weapons observed by the SMM were verifiably withdrawn to storage sites. Effective and immediate steps must be taken to disengage, de-escalate and consolidate a strict ceasefire and an unconditional and verifiable withdrawal of heavy weapons. These are necessary steps toward achieving a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments and based on full respect for Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.

We call on the sides in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups to agree on concrete steps to advance the implementation of the Minsk agreements. This includes measures to further enhance the security situation by ensuring the stabilisation of the ceasefire and the withdrawal of Minsk regulated weapons and an agreement on the modalities of local elections in certain parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The local elections should take place in 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 be met. We furthermore reiterate our call for progress regarding the

exchange of prisoners and for the release of prisoners in an all for all exchange at the earliest opportunity

The constraints on the SMM's freedom of movement, which occur particularly in separatist-held areas, are unacceptable. We note the reported reduction in the restrictions imposed on SMM monitors from 9 to 15 May. We expect the restrictions to be reduced further as a matter of urgency until the SMM has full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including to the areas bordering the Russian Federation, in line with the Minsk agreements and repeated assurances by the sides. We welcome the SMM's efforts to increase its access to the non-government controlled areas, including along the state border. In this context, we are concerned that the SMM has not yet received the necessary security guarantees to establish Forward Patrol Bases in separatist controlled areas. We remain concerned by the continued interference with the SMM's technical means, including repeated jamming of UAVs over separatist controlled territory on 20 May, and further recent incidents of shooting at them.

We welcome recent steps taken to improve cooperation between the SMM and JCCC, and note that the SMM partly ascribes the drop in restrictions to the JCCC's intervention in a number of cases. We expect such interventions to continue, whenever a rapid response by the JCCC is needed to address impediments confronting the SMM, as agreed by the Normandy Four. This includes intervening to ensure the unhindered functioning of the SMM's mounted cameras in the Donetsk airport area that were recently disabled by separatists citing orders from superiors, in violation of the Minsk Package of Measures.

We condemn the recurring intimidation of SMM monitors. The overwhelming majority of these incidents occur in separatist-held areas, but we note with concern the intimidation of monitors on 13 May near a government-held village by five individuals identifying themselves as National Guard members. We also condemn the recent inflammatory and unfounded public remarks by separatists regarding the SMM, including the false allegation that the SMM had been involved in transporting and supplying ammunition to Ukrainian Armed Forces. We are particularly concerned that such public remarks have been used as a basis for apparently well-organised recent

public demonstrations in separatist-held areas aimed at the SMM, including outside the SMM's base in Donetsk city. Such disinformation poses real threats to the Mission's security and ability to operate.

Against the backdrop of the World Humanitarian Summit earlier this week in Istanbul, we again express our concern at the dire humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine. As reported by OCHA, the limited access to health care in separatist-held areas and along the line of contact is a pressing concern. Life-saving drugs such as insulin and haemodialysis are unavailable or extremely expensive. Over the past two years, mortality from cancer has increased drastically, with an estimated 60,000 children and adults in need of cancer treatment in the separatist-held areas of Donetsk Region alone. We condemn the severe restrictions imposed on international humanitarian actors in separatist-held areas.

The closing of crossing points due to shelling at the line of contact exposes civilians to severe danger, as long queues of vehicles and pedestrians wait to cross, sometimes overnight, or chart their own, perilous route across. We call on both sides to ensure the security necessary to enable safe and orderly crossing of civilians.

We remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments. In this regard, we underline Russia's responsibility and also yet again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet those commitments in full. We also again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists. The duration of the European Union's economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements. The ceasefire must be fully respected. We call for the complete withdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment, and mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine. Safe access and provisions for humanitarian aid is needed. The return of Ukrainian control over its entire state border is paramount. We reiterate our deep concern about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in separatist-held areas. In this context, we express our concern about SMM reports regarding the presence

of an Orlan-10 UAV in separatist-held areas. We note that this type of UAV is manufactured only in Russia and used by the Russian military. In that regard, we would appreciate receiving clarifications on the presence of this UAV from the Russian delegation.

Mr Chair, the European Union 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, to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilise the situation and to 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 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 and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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