



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1304 Vienna, 4 March 2021**

#### **EU Statement on the illegal annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation**

Seven years on from the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, the European Union continues to condemn this violation of international law and blatant breach of OSCE principles and commitments. The European Union remains fully committed to the sovereignty, and territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, including Crimea.

The increasing militarisation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation, including through multiple military exercises and the construction of warships, continues to negatively impact the security situation in the Black Sea region. In violation of international humanitarian law, Russian citizenship and conscription into the armed forces of the Russian Federation have been imposed on Crimean residents

The European Union condemns all steps taken towards a forced integration of the illegally-annexed peninsula into Russia. The so-called “referendum” was a blatant violation of the Ukrainian constitution and was not recognised as legitimate by the international community. The imposition of Russian laws and regulations in the peninsula, the construction of the Kerch Bridge, the opening of a railway section and other infrastructural projects without Ukraine’s consent are examples of such forced integration.

The illegal restrictions that Russia has imposed on the passage of ships through the Kerch Strait to and from the Azov Sea are having considerable negative economic

consequences for Ukraine's ports in the Azov Sea and the wider region. The EU expects Russia to ensure free and unhindered passage of all ships in accordance with international law.

The European Union regrets the fact that since Russia's illegal annexation, the human rights situation in the Crimean peninsula has significantly deteriorated. Residents of the peninsula face systematic restrictions of their fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression, religion or belief and association and the right to peaceful assembly. Journalists, human rights defenders and defence lawyers face interference and intimidation in their work. The Crimean Tatars continue to be unacceptably persecuted, pressured and have their human rights gravely violated, including through the shutting down of Crimean Tatar media outlets, and the banning of the activities of the Mejlis, their self-governing body, and the persecution of its leaders and members of their community. Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians and all ethnic and religious communities in the peninsula must be able to maintain and develop their culture, education, identity and cultural heritage traditions, which are currently threatened by Russia's illegal annexation.

The EU reiterates its call for the immediate release of Emir-Usein Kuku and his five co-defendants, Oleh Prykhodko, recently sentenced Enver Omerov, Riza Omerov and Ayder Dzhapparov and all others who have been detained in the Crimean peninsula and sentenced in breach of international law. All pending cases of human rights violations and abuses must be thoroughly investigated. The SMM, in line with its mandate which covers all of Ukraine, and international human rights actors should have full, free and unrestricted access to the peninsula.

The EU welcomes the diplomatic efforts aimed at restoring Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and will consider concrete Ukrainian ideas in this regard, in line with the established non-recognition policy.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, 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.