



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N°1095
Vienna, 7 April 2016**

**EU Statement on Russia's Ongoing Aggression against
Ukraine and Violations of OSCE Principles and Commitments**

The European Union is deeply concerned by the recent marked increase in the number of ceasefire violations, further worsening a volatile situation along the line of contact. The significant use of heavy weapons and the close proximity between military formations on both sides is of particular concern. We call for immediate steps to de-escalate the situation and consolidate the ceasefire. Furthermore, all sides must unconditionally and verifiably withdraw all Minsk-regulated weapons. These are necessary steps in order to move towards a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

Implementation of the Minsk agreements requires full, safe and unhindered SMM access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border. Yet despite repeated assurances, SMM UAVs continue to be jammed and shot at and SMM patrols are frequently being delayed or denied access, particularly in areas held by Russia-backed separatists. All restrictions must be lifted without further delay. Moreover, we are concerned by the string of hostile articles published in separatist-controlled media outlets targeting the SMM. Such misleading information can undermine the public trust in the SMM, which is critical to their work and safety.

We regret the limited recent progress in the Trilateral Contact Group and its relevant working groups. We urge the sides in the Security Working Group to agree on concrete measures to de-escalate the situation along the line of contact. Moreover, we again call on the sides in the Political Working Group to agree, without delay, on the modalities for local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, relevant OSCE standards and to be

monitored by ODIHR. Established conditions for ODIHR observation must be met, including security and access for ODIHR.

We are encouraged by the reported progress, albeit almost exclusively in government-controlled areas, in implementing the agreement on mine action recently agreed in Minsk. We urge that similar steps are taken in separatist-held areas without further delay.

The European Union remains firm in its call on all parties to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and also yet again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet those commitments. The European Union also calls 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 respected. All Minsk-regulated weapons must be withdrawn and foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential. We reiterate our concern about information regarding the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia.

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.