



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1108
Vienna, 14 July 2016**

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

Earlier today, the Permanent Council commemorated the anniversary of the tragedy of flight MH17 on 17 July 2014. Those directly or indirectly responsible for the downing of MH17 must be held accountable and brought to justice, in accordance with UNSC resolution 2166. In this respect, the EU and its Member States fully support the ongoing efforts to come to an effective prosecution.

The EU is deeply concerned by the sharp rise in ceasefire violations reported by the SMM. Heavy fighting in strategic hot spots has intensified. From 27 June to 3 July the SMM noted the highest number of artillery explosions in a single week this year, over 90% of which were concentrated in the Svitlodarsk and Debaltseve area, and observed multiple-launch rocket systems used – a first since early April. This deplorable deterioration exacerbates the humanitarian plight and increases the risk of further civilian casualties. We therefore join Chief Monitor Apakan in urging all sides to immediately disengage, strictly adhere to the ceasefire and verifiably withdraw all Minsk-regulated weapons. These are necessary steps in order to ensure a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

In addition to the lack of security, we are particularly concerned by two challenges confronting the SMM: restrictions on the SMM and a dysfunctional JCCC.

First, while the overall number of restrictions on the SMM’s freedom of movement has recently declined, the SMM’s monitors and remote monitoring equipment still face severe obstacles, particularly in separatist-held areas, where about 70% of the restrictions imposed on the SMM occur. For instance, separatists have systematically blocked the SMM’s access to the Stanytsia Luhanska bridge, citing instructions or simply refusing to talk to the SMM patrol at all. In addition, the SMM’s access to the Ukrainian-Russian State border remains sporadic, limited and conditional. Even

when the SMM is afforded access to the border, the visits are highly controlled: they only see what they are allowed to. This is unacceptable. We reiterate our firm position that the SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border. We support the Mission's plans to build up its remote monitoring capacity, including through investigating the use of new technologies.

Second, the JCCC needs to become more effective. To date, there has been no effective investigation by the JCCC into cases of intimidation and obstruction of the SMM, including the downing of the SMM's UAVs. Moreover, the JCCC has yet to ensure an adequate and systematic rapid response, when called upon by the SMM. This impunity only incentivises further obstruction of the SMM. This is unacceptable and we call on Russia and Ukraine to meaningfully engage to strengthen the JCCC, so it can fulfil its important role. Impunity needs to end.

Mr. Chair, we again call on the sides in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups to agree on steps toward the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. This includes further measures to enhance the security situation such as agreeing to a complete disengagement plan and on steps to improve the effectiveness of the JCCC, as well as agreeing on the modalities of holding local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions 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 also reiterate our call on the sides to agree on the further exchange of prisoners and detainees.

We remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and yet again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet those commitments in full. Moreover, we again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists. 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 deep concern 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.

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