



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1071 Vienna, 15 October 2015

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

Mr Chair, the European Union welcomes the fact that the ceasefire is largely holding. At the same time, we express concern about the recent shelling incidents, resulting in further casualties, as reported by the SMM. This underlines that the situation on the ground remains fragile.

The European Union welcomes the recent progress in implementing the withdrawal agreement of 29 September. However, the SMM still needs to receive sufficient baseline information on storage sites, inventory and withdrawal routes to enable necessary verification. The withdrawal process should not be undermined. We therefore urge all sides, in particular the Russia-backed separatists, to abide by the withdrawal agreement fully and without delay. This should be accompanied without any further delay by the full and unconditional withdrawal of all heavy weapons in accordance with the Minsk Package of Measures and subject to SMM verification. In this regard, we note with concern the large presence of heavy weapons in violation of withdrawal lines, particularly in separatist-controlled areas as reported by the SMM. We urge the Security Working Group to swiftly agree on concrete, immediate steps to this end.

Mr. Chair, the European Union welcomes the establishment of the first SMM Forward Patrol Bases near the line of contact to advance the SMM's verification and monitoring activities. However, we are concerned to hear the complications in setting up all planned forward patrol bases in separatist-held areas. In the same vein, SMM monitors and UAVs still face significant restrictions in large parts of separatist-held areas and especially in the areas close to the border with Russia. This is

unacceptable. Full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine is critical in order for the SMM to fulfil its mandate.

We call on the Trilateral Contact Group and the relevant subordinate working groups to swiftly agree on concrete steps for the clearance of explosive remnants of war. We commend the efforts of the OSCE to step up demining operations and call on all sides to reach an agreement on this vital issue in the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group. This will strengthen the ceasefire and improve conditions for the safe return of internally displaced persons and for full SMM access. With winter at our door step, quick action is vital before the harsh weather will make it all but impossible to clear areas of mines and unexploded ordnance.

Mr. Chair, the European Union remains firm in its call on all parties to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and to honour their commitments in full. We underline the Russian authorities' responsibility in this regard. The ceasefire must be respected in full, all heavy weapons withdrawn and foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries removed from Ukraine. We recall our concern about reports regarding continued presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia in separatist-controlled areas, including the presence of a Russian Zhytel station jamming communication and a Russian TOS-1 Buratino rocket launcher. We recall that the duration of the EU economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential. We again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists to meet their Minsk commitments in full.

We also take note of the ongoing discussions in the framework of the Political Working Group and we call for a constructive approach in these discussions. We repeat our call for an agreement on the holding of local elections in certain parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, relevant OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR.

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*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member 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.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.