



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council N°1086 Vienna, 21 January 2016

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

After a decline in ceasefire violations towards the end of 2015, the first weeks of the new year have seen an unfortunate rise in tension along the line of contact. This includes a rise in casualties, increasing use of heavy weapons and military movements in the security zone. The European Union calls for immediate and concrete steps to halt this deterioration, to consolidate the ceasefire and move towards a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE commitments and principles.

All sides should unconditionally and verifiably withdraw all heavy weapons in line with the Minsk Package of Measures and the Addendum. All outstanding baseline information should be provided to the SMM. Without it, the SMM cannot verify the withdrawal process. Moreover, all restrictions on the SMM's UAVs' and monitors' freedom of movement must cease at once. In particular, significant restrictions are prevalent in large swaths of separatist-held areas, especially along the Ukrainian-Russian State border. Full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine is crucial for the SMM to fulfil its mandate.

In the same vein, as reported by the SMM, there have been several instances of intimidation of SMM monitors in the past weeks. Monitors have been held at gunpoint, threatened, forced to the ground and questioned by separatist forces. Shots have hit an SMM vehicle, UAVs and a few meters from monitors on foot. We condemn any such intimidation. It is unacceptable and must end at once.

The humanitarian situation remains grave, particularly in separatist-held areas. Severe restrictions imposed by separatists in parts of Donetsk region and

unexploded remnants throughout the conflict zone continue to obstruct acutely needed humanitarian assistance. We again call on the separatists to remove their obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian relief in line with humanitarian principles. We also urge the Humanitarian Working Group and the Security Working Group to agree on steps enabling necessary humanitarian relief and mine action.

As agreed by Normandy leaders in December, we urge the sides to agree in the Political Working Group by end of January on the modalities of local elections in certain parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, relevant OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. It is important that established conditions for ODIHR observation are met, including ensuring security and access for ODIHR.

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 their commitments. We recall that the duration of the EU economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements and that the European Council decided on 21 December 2015 to prolong the duration of the restrictive measures. Foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries must be removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential. We remain concerned about reports 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.