



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1161
Vienna, 19 October 2017**

**EU statement on “Russia’s Ongoing Aggression Against
Ukraine and Illegal Annexation of Crimea”**

The EU has on numerous occasions raised its concerns about the situation of Ukrainian citizens illegally detained or sentenced by the Russian authorities in Russia and in illegally-annexed Crimea and Sevastopol. The latest case in the long series of illegal detentions concerns Pavlo Hryb, a disabled 19-year old citizen of Ukraine who was kidnapped on 24 August in Gomel, Belarus. Pavlo Hryb is currently detained in a pre-trial detention facility in Krasnodar, Russian Federation. There are no clear charges issued by Russian authorities against him, other than a general accusation of having committed a terrorist act. Pavlo Hryb's unjustified detention poses a grave threat to his health, given his need of special medical treatment, to which he still has no access. Ukrainian doctors should be allowed to see him while he remains in detention, as required by a recent injunction from the European Court of Human Rights. His case is yet another instance in the series of blatant human rights violations committed by Russian authorities against Ukrainian citizens. Pavlo Hryb's case also features the illegal abduction of an individual in the territory of a third country.

We call on Russia to immediately release Pavlo Hryb and all other Ukrainian citizens who have been illegally detained or sentenced in Russia and in illegally-annexed Crimea and Sevastopol. This also includes Oleh Sentsov, whose whereabouts were unknown for some time and who has reportedly been transferred to another faraway prison, in breach of international law. All together we are aware of at least 47 cases of illegally detained or sentenced Ukrainian citizens in illegally annexed Crimea and Sevastopol as well as in Russia.

The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, 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 European Union will remain committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

We deplore a renewed increase in ceasefire violations in hotspots along the Line of Contact while the SMM continues to report heightened training activity primarily in non-government-controlled areas. SMM UAVs have also spotted large numbers of heavy weapons, which appeared to be well-maintained, refurbished and loaded with ammunition. This trend in breach of the Minsk agreements is particularly worrying when compared with events of last year. We recall that a decrease in ceasefire violations in September last year was followed by a period of sustained fighting in October and November. Without further stabilising measures – notably withdrawing weapons where the SMM can effectively monitor and verify them – the risk of escalation remains. We strongly condemn the restriction of SMM's freedom of movement by separatists on numerous occasions. We reiterate once again that the mandate of the SMM allows for unimpeded movement throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian border and illegally annexed Crimea and Sevastopol.

We remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full in order to achieve a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these fundamental principles must be restored. We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility and to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. We again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists, and we remain deeply concerned 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 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 and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.