



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1194
Vienna, 30 August 2018**

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

Mr. Chairperson, we support the back-to-school ceasefire that came into effect yesterday as an imperative step towards a secure environment in particular for all children affected by the conflict. Each recommitment has led to a decrease in ceasefire violations and a welcome respite for civilians living close to the contact line. The latest weekly report of the SMM revealed 6 civilian casualties due to mines and shellings. We urge again the sides for the respect of their commitments of full ceasefire, particularly in residential areas. To sustain the ceasefire, we strongly urge the sides to demonstrate the necessary political will to disengage, withdraw heavy weapons and start demining.

Regrettably, the 1 July recommitment to the ceasefire was followed by military hardware build-up, new trenches and heavy weapons in violation of withdrawal lines as well as continued ceasefire violations at the Line of Contact as well as inside or near disengagement areas. Of utmost concern is the presence of four distinct electronic warfare systems spotted for the first time by the SMM on 28 July near Chornukhyne, an area held by Russia-backed armed formations. One of these was identified as an anti-UAV system.

On the evening and night of 7-8 August an SMM long-range UAV observed several convoys of trucks entering Ukraine from the Russian Federation outside an official border crossing facility and without the consent of Ukrainian authorities. In a context where the Russian Federation continues to oppose a substantial expansion of the OSCE Border Observation Mission and where Russia-backed armed formations systematically deny the SMM access to certain border areas, this incident underlines the crucial role of the SMM UAVs. Regrettably, they are targeted and jammed repeatedly. We repeat that

the operational, security and financial consequences of these obstructions must be assessed. The parties responsible for any damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs should be held accountable, including politically and financially.

We continue to condemn any violation of the SMM mandate, which clearly states that the monitors and their technical equipment should have safe, secure and unhindered access throughout Ukraine. This includes the Crimean peninsula and along the entire Ukrainian-Russian border. In clear violation of this mandate, the SMM freedom of movement was restricted no less than 22 times between 20 and 26 August alone. 21 of these restrictions happened in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations. We are particularly concerned about the 13 August incident in non-government controlled Smile, where a member of the armed formations disengaged the safety of his rifle close to an SMM patrol and subsequently pointed the rifle at the SMM vehicle when they left the area. We strongly condemn any restrictions and threats directed towards the monitors and call upon those in effective control of the area to ensure accountability.

On 26 July and 23 August, the 77th and 78th so-called “humanitarian convoys” were observed entering Ukrainian territory from Russia at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point. As with previous cases, this happened without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities and in clear violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and without fundamental international humanitarian principles being observed. The Minsk agreements foresee that humanitarian aid will be delivered through an international mechanism. An agreement on this in the humanitarian working group remains crucial.

The EU remains firm in its 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 must be restored. We reaffirm our full support to the endeavours in the Normandy Format aimed at sustainable and peaceful resolution of this conflict. We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility in this regard and to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it

backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. We again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the armed formations, and we remain deeply concerned about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations. 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 within its internationally recognised borders, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to uphold these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilising the situation and reversing moves that contravene these principles. We strongly condemn the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces since February 2014 and Russia's illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which we will not recognise. The European Union will remain committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE 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.