



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1233 Vienna, 20 June 2019

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

Mr. Chairman, the EU reiterates its deep concern about the precarious security situation in the area of the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine, which is a consequence of acts of aggression by Russia against Ukraine. The armed violence continues unabated with numerous ceasefire violations, and the presence and use of weapons that should have been withdrawn are on the rise.

The dire security situation takes a heavy toll on the civilian population on both sides of the conflict line. The SMM recently reported about further civilian casualties, including a girl injured in an explosion near Vesele, a woman injured due to shelling in Zaitseve and five civilians from one family injured when their house came under shelling in Marinka. Residential areas and civilian infrastructure, including a functioning school in Zolote-5/Mykhailivka, continue to be damaged by shelling and small arms fire. Civilians attempting to cross the line of contact face hardship and long queues at checkpoints in Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

We are concerned that, despite repeated calls, too little is done to minimize the danger posed by the presence of mines and unexploded ordnance. In a recent incident, two men were injured and a tractor destroyed by an explosion in a field south of Popasna. We strongly deplore laying of new mines, including anti-tank ones, as reported again by the SMM, and reiterate our call on all sides to step up efforts on comprehensive mine action. It is also disturbing that many

communities along the contact line continue to experience water shortage due to interrupted supply. We call for urgent measures to improve the situation in this regard.

We welcomed the TCG participants' re-commitment to begin disengagement in the area near Stanytsia Luhanska and the ongoing efforts to work out a new re-commitment to a comprehensive "harvest" ceasefire. However, we are concerned that reoccurring ceasefire violations in the disengagement area prevent implementation of this important step. We are also worried about the lack of effective progress with disengagement in the other two pilot areas and call on the participants to fully respect their commitments. We call on the Russian Federation to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to this end.

Mr. Chairman, we commend our monitors for their professionalism and dedication in carrying out their mandate, despite an extremely challenging and often hostile environment in which they work. In this context, we strongly deplore any attempts to harass, intimidate them or impede their work, which continue to occur predominantly in areas controlled by Russia-backed armed formations, and call on the sides to ensure their full safety and security. We condemn the continued targeting and jamming of the SMM's technical assets, in particular SMM UAVs. On 15 June, small-arms fire was directed at an SMM mini-UAV near non-government-controlled Prymorske. Those responsible for any willful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

We deeply condemn any restrictions affecting the SMM's freedom of movement, which mostly occur at checkpoints in non-government-controlled southern Donetsk region and near the Ukraine-Russia state border in Luhansk region. These restrictions limit the capacity of the Mission to comprehensively monitor these areas. We support SMM's intentions to open additional Forward Patrol Bases in order to strengthen its footprint in the area and call for security guarantees, which would pave the way for implementing those plans. We remain deeply concerned about the movement of trucks observed by the SMM from near the Ukraine-Russia state border to non-government-controlled areas. Military trucks spotted by the SMM on 14 June travelling back and forth between a railway

station and a warehouse in non-government-controlled Sukhodilsk near the Ukraine-Russia state border add to our concerns and raise further questions.

Mr. Chairman, our position on the unjustified use of force by Russia near the Kerch Strait on 25 November 2018, its negative impact in the Black and Azov Seas and Russia's violations of international law is well-known. We once again urge Russia to comply without delay with the order of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) delivered on 25 May and to immediately release the 24 detained Ukrainian servicemen and allow them to return to Ukraine, to release and return to Ukraine's custody the vessels, and call on both parties to refrain from taking any action which might aggravate or extend the dispute. We reiterate that respect for international court rulings is fundamental for an international rules-based order.

We strongly urge Russia to refrain from any actions that undermine the implementation of the Minsk agreements, including offering expedited Russian citizenship for Ukrainian citizens, which could impede the full restoration of Ukrainian government control over its territory within its internationally recognised borders.

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 to the conflict in line with OSCE principles and commitments. 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. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. We again call on Russia to immediately stop fueling the conflict by 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 remains deeply worried about the deteriorating human rights situation in illegally annexed Crimea. The harassment and prosecution of those opposing the unlawful annexation, including the Crimean Tatars must stop immediately. We

expect Russia to end these practices and release without delay all illegally detained Ukrainians. The EU is particularly concerned about the deteriorating health of detained activist Edem Bekirov. We expect him to be granted access to appropriate medical care as recently ordered by the European Court of Human Rights. We call for full compliance with international human rights standards in the Peninsula.

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 the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, 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 REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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