



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1249 Vienna, 28 November 2019

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

Mr. Chairperson, we have recently seen some encouraging developments which are cause for cautious optimism for the upcoming weeks. We welcome the overall progress in the disengagement areas and commend Ukraine for the completion of the bridge near Stanytsia Luhanska well ahead of the start of the winter. The bridge will certainly ease the burden on the civilian population in the region, especially the elderly.

We also welcome the convening of the Normandy Four summit in Paris on 9 December and hope that this meeting will constitute an important step in the peaceful resolution of the conflict, in full respect of Ukrainian sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. This is only possible if there is strong political will on both sides. President Zelensky and his administration have shown the political will to negotiate an end to the conflict. We call on Russia to act likewise.

Last week we noted the return by Russia to Ukraine of the three vessels seized a year ago in the Black Sea near the Kerch Strait, as required by the binding order of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

Our optimism remains very cautious as we continue to witness a highly volatile security situation in the conflict areas, as reported by the SMM, with severe consequences for the civilians living near the contact line. We are very concerned that ceasefire violations persist at elevated levels and that civilian infrastructure and residential areas are being shelled, while the work of the SMM continues to be impeded, predominantly in non-government-controlled areas, which the EU strongly deplores. The SMM must have safe, secure, unconditional and unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine. This includes the illegally annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of

Sevastopol and along the Ukraine-Russia state border, to which the SMM is systematically denied access by Russia-backed armed formations. We once again deplore targeting of SMM assets, including SMM UAVs, by means of signal interference and small arms fire. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

We regret that Russia now persists with the so-called "humanitarian convoys" regularly every Thursday, some of which enter military compounds, in clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as of fundamental international humanitarian principles. We once again call on Russia to join an international mechanism for the delivery of humanitarian aid and to desist from its current practice, which is incompatible with basic principles of international law.

We reiterate our utmost concern about the Russian presidential decrees and their extensions, enabling the simplified granting of Russian citizenship to Ukrainian citizens, which constitutes yet another attack on the sovereignty of Ukraine and runs counter to the spirit and objectives of the Minsk agreements. We do not recognise the passports issued on the basis of these decrees and we call on other OSCE participating States to do likewise.

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 fuelling the conflict by providing financial and military support to the armed formations, and we remain deeply concerned about 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 are 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 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 implementing 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, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.