



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1302 Vienna, 11 February 2021

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

Madam Chair, confidence building measures are key components in conflict resolution. The cessation of fighting is the first step in facilitating an enabling environment for further measures. With this in mind, we note that the ceasefire agreement is largely holding, but regret that the increasing numbers of violations and local escalations make the security situation in eastern Ukraine more fragile, thus making further measures difficult. We also regret that Russia left the Joint Control and Coordination Commission and that there are still obstacles to setting up a joint mechanism for investigating ceasefire violations. Such a mechanism would contribute substantially to ensuring transparency and building trust between the sides.

Confidence building is just as important in military transparency as it is in political dialogue. In this respect, the Trilateral Contact Group, which consists of Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE, is an important mechanism and should be used to its full potential. We therefore call on Russia to assume its responsibility as a signatory of the Minsk agreements by acting constructively within the TCG and by implementing the provisions that it has committed itself to. We also urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to operationalise the Zolote and Shchastia entry-exit check points. We hope that the agreement to provide security guarantees for the repair of the gas distribution station near Marinka will be implemented soon. Humanitarian needs shall not be neglected due to political considerations.

We regret that the Russian Federation is moving forward with its plans to integrate the non-government controlled areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea with Russia. This goes directly against rebuilding the much needed confidence. Actions such as the simplified and selective procedure to obtain Russian citizenship and forced passportization as well as the imposition of Russian educational standards, language, currency and taxation are examples of attempts to de facto cut off these territories from Ukraine. This is a violation of the Minsk agreements, to which Russia is a signatory. We urge Russia to implement the commitments it has made in good faith.

The work of the SMM in reducing tensions and facilitating dialogue, including by gathering information on the security situation on the ground, is an important confidence building measure. We therefore call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to remove any undue restrictions to the freedom of movement of the SMM. The Mission should have safe and secure access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea, in line with its mandate.

The European Union regrets the severe impact the ongoing conflict has on the civilian population. Therefore, the EU and Member States have since 2014 devoted more than € 1 billion to humanitarian aid and reconstruction in the context of the conflict. In addition, as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to be an extra burden on the population, the EU has, together with UNDP, delivered equipment worth approximately EUR 80,000 as part of the EU's Covid-19 response package for Ukraine.

The EU remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation in the illegally annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. The arbitrary targeting of Crimean Tatars by the Russian authorities, the application of Russian anti-extremism legislation and unduly lengthy prison sentences have become a persistent trend. The EU reiterates its call for the immediate release of the Crimean Tatar and human rights defender Emir-Usein Kuku, detained exactly five years ago, and his five co-defendants. We also call for the release of Oleh Prykhodko, recently sentenced Enver Omerov, Riza Omerov and Ayder Dzhapparov and all others who have been detained in the Crimean peninsula and sentenced in breach of international law.

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 the 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 the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations. The duration of the European Union's 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 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.