



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No. 1345
Vienna, 18 November 2021**

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

1. Madam Chair, the European Union is deeply concerned about the upward trend in ceasefire violations in eastern Ukraine. In recent weeks, we have seen the highest number of reported ceasefire violations since the introduction of the additional measures in July 2020. There are also worrying reports about an increased presence and use of Minsk-proscribed weapons in the conflict zone that yet again caused serious damage to civilian properties. The ongoing deterioration of the security situation along the line of contact is of high concern to us and we urge the sides to do their utmost to adhere to the ceasefire agreement.
2. The worsening security situation is accompanied by increasingly hostile rhetoric from the Russian Federation towards Ukraine. The EU will continue to follow Russia’s actions near Ukraine’s borders and in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula closely. In this context, the public reports about a possible renewed military build-up by Russia near the border with Ukraine are worrying and something that we will continue to pay close attention to, in close dialogue with our partners. We would like to ask Russia to make use of the existing mechanisms under the Vienna Document regarding transparency on movement of troops.
3. The unprecedented restrictions that the SMM is facing on its freedom of movement are unacceptable. We deplore the fact that the SMM is being denied access on an almost daily basis by the Russia-backed armed formations in the non-government controlled areas. In addition, the SMM UAVs are consistently being subjected to jamming and interference, which means that the SMMs long range UAVs cannot be used to their full capacity. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs

and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially. We urge the Russian Federation to ensure that all restrictions on the SMM's freedom of movement are lifted and that the SMM and its assets have safe and secure access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea.

4. We reiterate our strong support for the Minsk agreements and the efforts of both the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group to find a peaceful resolution of the conflict, in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We regret that Russia repeatedly refused to meet on the level of the Normandy Foreign Ministers. In addition, a prolonged stand-still in the TCG needs to be avoided as it would be detrimental both to the security and the humanitarian situation in the conflict zone. We call on Russia, as a party to the conflict, to act constructively in these negotiations and to implement the Minsk agreements in good faith.
5. Transparency, including in the areas near the Ukrainian-Russian State border currently not under control by the Ukrainian government, is a key provision of the Minsk agreements. Full monitoring and verification of the border would be an important confidence-building measure that would allow for further progress in the conflict resolution process. We therefore welcome the SMM's updated Concept Note on enhancing monitoring of the non-government controlled areas near the border and would reaffirm our full support to the measures suggested by the SMM in this regard.
6. The EU deeply regrets the Russian decree signed by President Putin on 15 November on taking measures to ease access for goods to the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine. The decree implies a further separation of the non-government controlled areas from Ukraine by further economic integration with the Russian Federation. Such measures violate Ukraine's sovereignty, contradict the objectives of the Minsk agreements and impede Ukraine's future reintegration process.
7. The EU deplores the worrying trend of systematic targeting and persecution of human rights lawyers in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula by the Russian de-facto authorities. This persecution includes judicial harassment, office raids, disciplinary penalties and disbarment threats. We condemn the persecution of the ethnic Crimean Tatars, the most recent case being the detention of the human rights defender and lawyer Edem Semedliaev. The EU again urges Russia to respect its obligations under

international law and stop all human rights violations and abuses in the peninsula, as was also stated in the joint declaration of the International Crimea Platform adopted at the summit on 23 August in Kyiv.

8. 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 sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.
9. 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 the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, and ALBANIA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, 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.