



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1346 Vienna, 25 November 2021

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

1. Madam Chair, the European Union remains deeply concerned about the worsening security situation in the conflict zone, accompanied by an increased hostile rhetoric by the Russian Federation towards Ukraine. We will continue to follow the situation near Ukraine’s borders and in the illegally annexed Crimea in close dialogue with our partners. Any escalatory actions, threatening or de-stabilising behaviour are unacceptable. We urge Russia to make use of the existing mechanisms under the Vienna Document regarding transparency on movement and to de-escalate tensions.
2. We regret that the security situation remains tense. For the first time since the additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire were agreed in July 2020, the average number of ceasefire violations per day is higher than just before its enactment. Moreover, the presence and use of weapon systems banned by joint commitments has again led to casualties and damages of civilian infrastructure and raises concern about risk of further escalation.
3. We are seriously concerned about the intensifications of the impediments for the SMM, the vast majority occurring in the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine. The targeting of the SMM’s assets continues unabated and an SMM mini-UAV was lost near non-government-controlled Perevalsk, in the Luhansk region. It is also highly worrisome that last week the SMM observed eight non-SMM UAVs near its patrols and on 19 November members of the Russia-backed armed formations denied the SMM access to Staromykhailivka and threatened to shoot down an SMM mini-UAV. Such behaviour

is unacceptable. In addition, the SMM's freedom of movement continues to be restricted, including at a checkpoint of the Russia-backed armed formations south of the Stanytsia Luhanska Bridge, inside the disengagement area near Zolote and at a border crossing point and a railway station near and in Voznesenivka, both outside government control. We fully support the SMM in its important work and urge the Russian Federation to ensure that all restrictions to the SMM's work are removed.

4. We are deeply concerned with the continued standstill in the discussions in the Trilateral Contact Group as well as Russia's reluctance to engage in the Normandy format. It has now been over one year since the Zolote and Shchastia entry and exit checkpoints were planned to open. Unfortunately, these checkpoints are only open on the government controlled side. We reiterate our strong support to Ambassador Kinnunen and all coordinators of the working groups in facilitating a dialogue between the sides. We call on Russia, as a party to the conflict, to assume its responsibility and to engage in the TCG discussions in good faith.
5. Increasing transparency in the areas near the Ukrainian-Russian State border currently not under control by the Ukrainian government would be an important confidence-building measure. This is why the permanent monitoring of the Ukraine-Russia state border currently not under control by the Ukrainian government and verification of the OSCE, including the establishment of security zones in the Ukrainian and Russian border areas, is an important provision of the Minsk agreements. The EU is therefore supportive of the draft decision put forward by 37 participating States as we believe that the adoption of such a decision would allow for further progress in the conflict resolution process.
6. 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.

7. 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.