



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1136
Vienna, 9 March 2017**

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

The security situation along the line of contact remains highly volatile, marked by continued fierce fighting in hotspots, further humanitarian strife and casualties. We therefore again call on all sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect of the ceasefire, the withdrawal of all Minsk-proscribed weapons, complete disengagement, full, safe and unhindered SMM access – including along the Ukrainian-Russian border – and full humanitarian access in line with international humanitarian principles. These are important steps toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these fundamental principles must be restored.

The past days have seen yet more incidents of gross intimidation of the SMM in areas held by Russian-backed separatist, including small arms fire close to SMM and the loss of yet another UAV. The SMM also continues to face significant access restrictions, particularly in separatist-held areas where restrictions on the SMM are also imposed in a more aggressive manner. This is unacceptable. Those responsible must be held accountable and the SMM must be allowed full access to recover the UAV. We expect the JCCC to take swift action to this end. The SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian border. We also again condemn the recent systematic and aggressive disinformation aimed at the SMM stemming from the separatists. If left unchecked, as underlined by the SMM Deputy Chief Monitor during his briefings here this week, such statements can increase tensions and aggression towards the SMM, putting our monitors in danger.

We reiterate the importance of a timely extension of the SMM's mandate and adoption of an adequate budget. All participating States should engage constructively to ensure that agreement to this end is reached as soon as possible.

We are following with concern the on-going blockade of railways across the line of contact and are concerned by SMM reports that blockade participants seem to be fortifying their position near Bakhmut. We urge the government of Ukraine to continue its effort to address the railway blockade. As we stated before, unilateral actions jeopardize efforts to resolve the crisis in and around Ukraine. We condemn recent so-called administrative measures in certain parts of Donetsk and Luhansk such as the reported seizure of Ukrainian companies and the adoption of a foreign currency. We repeat our condemnation of Russia's recognition of documents issued in certain parts of Donetsk and Luhansk region which are not under Ukrainian government control. This seriously undermines Ukrainian sovereignty. There can be no pretext for such actions, which contradict the spirit of the Minsk agreements, are legally null and void, and increase tensions as well as sever bonds across the line of contact.

We again call on the sides in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups to agree on steps toward the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. This includes the modalities of local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in full accordance with Ukrainian legislation, OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. We reiterate our firm position that established conditions for ODIHR monitoring, including ensuring security and access, must be met.

We remain firm in our 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 in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We have repeatedly heard in this council from the Russian Federation that the crisis in and around Ukraine is supposedly a "civil war", and that Russia's sole role is in the facilitation of dialogue. We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility and to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. We again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military

support to the separatists, and we remain deeply concerned about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in separatist-held areas. The duration of the European Union's economic 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 recognise these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilise the situation and reverse moves that contravene these principles. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and we will not recognise it. The European Union will remain committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures, and we call again on OSCE participating States to consider similar non-recognition measures in line with the UNGA Resolution 68/262.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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