



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1237 Vienna, 25 July 2019

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

The EU welcomes the recent recommitment to the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine, which came into effect just after midnight on 21 July as agreed at the meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group on 17 July. We are following the situation very closely. We agree with the Chairperson-in-Office, Slovak Minister Miroslav Lajčák that this is an urgently needed and significant step, particularly considering the rising number of civilian casualties along the contact line reported by the SMM. We echo the Chairperson-in-Office’s call on the sides to live up to their commitments, and finally establish a comprehensive, sustainable and unlimited ceasefire. We hope that following the successfully conducted early parliamentary elections in Ukraine, the efforts to achieve a sustainable political solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine, as agreed in the Minsk agreements, in line with OSCE principles and commitments, and in full respect of Ukraine’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence within its internationally recognised borders, will be further consolidated.

The latest recommitment builds on the positive developments in the recent process of disengagement of forces and hardware from Stanytsia Luhanska. We welcome reports by the SMM about ongoing demining activities by the State Emergency Services of Ukraine inside the disengagement area and the operation of a shuttle bus service facilitating the crossing of the contact line in Stanytsia Luhanska. We call on all sides to take all necessary steps to keep the momentum and ensure the long-term sustainability of the process. We look forward to the swift implementation of the agreed repairs to the bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska. We also call on the sides to open

new crossing points along the contact line, especially in the Luhansk region, and to undertake necessary repairs of critical civilian infrastructure on both sides of the contact line to ease human suffering.

Despite the ceasefire in place, the security situation in the conflict areas in eastern Ukraine remains tense and unpredictable, with a high potential to deteriorate quickly. Last week the SMM continued to observe the presence of weapons in violations of withdrawal lines and mines, some of which were spotted for the first time. We once again reiterate our call to disengage, withdraw heavy weapons and step up efforts on comprehensive mine action.

Mr. Chairman, the SMM remains our source of reliable information on the situation on the ground. In order for the monitors to be able to do their job properly, their freedom of movement cannot be hindered. As stated in the latest weekly report of the SMM , the systematic restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement occurred exclusively in non-government controlled areas, including in the area near the Ukrainian-Russian state border. The EU strongly condemns any attempts to harass, intimidate or impede in any way the work of SMM monitors by Russia-backed armed formations and call on those responsible to ensure their full safety and security. The EU reiterates its calls for the SMM to have access to the illegally annexed Crimean Peninsula, where the human rights situation continues to deteriorate, in line with the Mission's mandate that covers the entire territory of Ukraine in accordance with its internationally recognized borders. We once again deplore targeting of SMM assets, including SMM UAVs. Those responsible for any willful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially. We call on Russia to stop supplying high-tech jamming equipment to the armed formations it backs in Donbas.

We reiterate our utmost concern about the Russian presidential decrees, enabling the simplified issuing of Russian passports to Ukrainian citizens, which constitutes another attack on the sovereignty of Ukraine. Last week President Putin further

expanded the scope of implementation of this decision extending it from the residents of non-government controlled areas of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions to all Ukrainian citizens who were permanent residents in Donbas as of April 2014. These steps run counter to the spirit and the objectives of the Minsk agreements. We will continue to monitor the situation in eastern Ukraine and stand ready to consider further options, including non-recognition of Russian passports issued in contradiction to the Minsk agreements, in close coordination with our international partners.

The EU's position on the unjustified use of force by Russia near the Kerch Strait on 25 November 2018, its negative impact in the Black and Azov Seas and Russia's violations of international law is well-known. We once again urge Russia to comply without delay with the order of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) delivered on 25 May and to immediately release the 24 detained Ukrainian servicemen and allow them to return to Ukraine, to release and return to Ukraine's custody the vessels, and call on both parties to refrain from taking any action which might aggravate or extend the dispute. Respect for international court rulings is fundamental for an international rules-based order.

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 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 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 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* 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 and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.