



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1044 Vienna, 12 March 2015

EU Statement on Russia's Aggression against Ukraine and Violations of OSCE Principles and Commitments

The European Union welcomes that the ceasefire continues to be largely respected and the number of ceasefire violations has been reduced. However, the situation continues to be fragile and instances of ceasefire violations occur, including in and around Donetsk airport and east of Mariupol, where the situation is of particular concern and where heavy weapons are being used. We are also seriously concerned that despite the declared ceasefire, there are further casualties almost on a daily basis. The ceasefire must be fully observed. We reiterate that any attempts by the Russia-backed separatists to gain control of additional territory will seriously undermine all efforts promoting political resolution of the conflict. We repeat our call on Russia to use its influence over the separatists to fully implement their commitments.

We note the many SMM observations of significant movements of convoys of heavy weapons from both sides of the line of contact. We are encouraged by the reduction in the use of heavy weapons along most of the line of contact. We reiterate that for the SMM to verify a withdrawal in line with the Minsk package, the SMM must receive the necessary baseline information. The SMM must have free access to fully monitor these movements and the storage of heavy weapons. Without baseline information and unhindered access there is a risk that heavy weapons might be relocated or hidden away and used in a new military build-up. We note for instance the SMM observation that a number of heavy weapons were hidden in a "LPR"-controlled coal mine.

We repeat our call for the full implementation of all aspects of the Minsk Agreements by all signatories as the only way forward towards a sustainable political solution based on full respect for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial

integrity within its internationally recognised borders. Full respect for the ceasefire regime and a verified withdrawal of heavy weapons are essential steps in the implementation of the Minsk Agreements. We once again call for the immediate withdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment, as well as mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine under OSCE monitoring as well as disarmament of all illegal groups. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard. We recall that the Minsk Protocol called for a substantial and effective OSCE monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. In this context, we regret that Russia once again has not agreed to the necessary expansion of the Border Observation Mission at two Russian border checkpoints. We reiterate that re-establishing Ukrainian control over its border remains essential. The provisions concerning the political process included in the Minsk Agreements are also important parts in their entire implementation.

We welcome continuous efforts made in the Normandy format, including the oversight mechanism at the level of Political directors and Vice-ministers, to ensure full implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

Mr Chairman, we attach great importance to the SMM that is playing a vital role on the ground and we reiterate our strong support to the SMM. [We welcome today's decision on the extension of the SMM mandate and the expansion of the ceiling to 1000 monitors / We look forward to adopting a decision on extension of the mandate, including an expansion of the ceiling to 1000 monitors]. We stand ready to continue our support, including through financial and operational contributions. At the informal EU foreign ministers meeting last Friday, a discussion on how best to support the SMM took place with the presence of the OSCE Secretary General. A key issue remains to ensure full and free access to the SMM to independently monitor and verify developments, including in all parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and along the border with Russia. The restrictions on movement are extensive in many places. For instance the SMM recently reported that they had no access whatsoever in the south of the Donetsk region controlled by the "DPR". The safety and security of monitors is of paramount importance. The harassment, threats and warning shots they experience is unacceptable and must stop. We also note the continuing "jamming" of the UAVs.

Mr Chairman, we recall that the Minsk package calls for humanitarian aid to be delivered through an international mechanism. We deeply regret that so-called humanitarian convoys from Russia continue to enter Ukrainian territory, without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities and in clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and without fundamental international humanitarian principles being observed.

The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We once again urge Russia to recognise by acts these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute 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 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 LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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