

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1100
Vienna, 12 May 2016**

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

The European Union welcomes the Foreign Ministers’ meeting in the Normandy Format held yesterday in Berlin and their efforts to advance a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

We call on the sides in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups to build on it by agreeing on concrete steps that advance full implementation of the Minsk agreements. In the short term, this includes fully abiding by the ceasefire, the full disengagement of armed formations and agreeing on the modalities of local elections in certain parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in 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.

Despite the overall reduction in ceasefire violations, the situation on the ground remains very fragile, which has also hampered the SMM’s monitoring activity. We condemn recent incidents of intimidation of SMM monitors in separatist-held parts of Donetsk region as reported by the SMM. Moreover, the military style parades on 9 May in Donetsk and Luhansk, involving a large number of heavy weapons in violation of the Minsk agreements, heightened the tension. We reiterate our call on all sides to take effective and immediate steps to fully disengage and consolidate the ceasefire. All Minsk-regulated weapons must be unconditionally and verifiably withdrawn. The SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian state border. Despite all parties’ stated support for the SMM, significant restrictions on the SMM’s freedom of movement persist, particularly in large swaths of areas held by Russia-backed separatists.

We remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments. We welcome the recommitment of the new Ukrainian government in this regard. We underline Russia's responsibility regarding the full implementation of the Minsk agreements and yet again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet those commitments in full. We also again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists. The duration of the European Union's economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements. The recent decrease in violence must be turned into a strict respect of the ceasefire. We call for the complete withdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment, and mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine, the return of Ukrainian control over its entire state border, and safe access and provisions for humanitarian aid to people in need. We reiterate our deep concern about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in separatist-held areas.

The European Union recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to recognise these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times, to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilise the situation and to 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 country NORWAY, member 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.