



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1199
Vienna, 1 November 2018**

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

Mr. Chairperson, the EU condemns in the strongest possible terms the downing of an SMM long-range UAV on 27 October near Nyzhnokrynske, an area held by Russia-backed armed formations. We note the SMM’s preliminary assessment that the most likely cause of the downing was an impact to the UAV which disrupted its anti-jamming system and power supply and that eight people heard an explosion in the area around the time of the incident. The downing followed the spotting by the UAV of a surface-to-air missile system east of non-government controlled Nyzhnokrynske, as well as yet another spotting of convoys on an unpaved road near the Ukrainian-Russian border far from official border crossing facilities. This incident gives rise to serious concerns regarding the nature of the cargo transported and demands an explanation by the Russian Federation. We underline that any interference with SMM technical equipment goes against the letter and spirit of the Minsk agreements and we repeat that the operational, security and financial consequences of such obstructions must be assessed. Those responsible for any willful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

We remain deeply concerned that the SMM continued to face other restrictions of its freedom of movement and impediments to the implementation of its mandate. The Mission’s freedom of movement was restricted 31 times between 15 and 21 October of which the overwhelming majority took place in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations. In addition to the loss of the long range UAV, the SMM also

lost a mini-UAV due to jamming on 26 October, lost the signal to a mid-range UAV on two occasions on 23 October and temporarily lost the signal to a long range UAV on 19 October.

Mr. Chairperson, regretfully we see no progress with regard to disengagement. During the last reporting period the SMM recorded 66 ceasefire violations inside the Zolote disengagement area and six within 5km of its periphery. It further recorded three ceasefire violations inside the Petrivske disengagement area as well as 69 within 5km of its periphery. On 19 October, inside the disengagement area, the SMM observed a recently deepened trench leading to a position assessed as belonging to the Ukrainian Armed Forces as well as another recently deepened trench and fortified position, assessed as belonging to the Russia-backed armed formations. We reiterate our call for disengagement, withdrawal of heavy weapons and comprehensive demining and we remind the sides that civilians continue to pay the price for their lack of action in this regard.

After the shelling that killed a 17 year old girl and her mother in Zolote-5 on 13 October, the SMM continued to observe a deteriorating security situation. On 18 October a man and a woman were killed in an explosion between Zolote-4 and Zolote-5 and during the reporting period, an increasing number of civilians in Zolote-4 and Zolote-5 expressed concern to the SMM about the situation, with some saying that residents were leaving the areas due to the proximity of military and military-type presence as well as the recent civilian casualties.

On 25 October the 80th so-called “humanitarian convoy” was observed entering Ukrainian territory from Russia at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point. As in previous cases, this happened without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities and in clear violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as of fundamental international humanitarian principles. The Minsk agreements foresee that humanitarian aid will be delivered through an international mechanism. An agreement on this in the humanitarian working group remains crucial.

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. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. The Minsk Agreements provide for local elections to be held within the framework of the Ukrainian legislation. We reiterate our position that any other form of “elections” as announced by the separatists and scheduled for 11 November would contradict the letter and spirit of the Agreements and would thus be considered null and void. Elections must be organized in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. 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. 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 information on 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 EU is strongly concerned about the militarization of the Azov Sea and the interruptions of commercial shipping. The European Union will remain committed to

fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* 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.

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