



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1291 Vienna, 26 November 2020

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

Mr. Chairperson, the European Union regrets that the relatively calm security situation since the ceasefire came into place on 27 July has not yet resulted in a more productive atmosphere within the Trilateral Contact Group. We again call on Russia to demonstrate a constructive approach in the TCG. Ukraine has already shown its readiness to move ahead with four new disengagement areas and nineteen de-mining zones. It is also urgent to grant the ICRC access to the detainees in the non-government controlled areas as they have in the areas controlled by the Ukrainian government.

Despite the agreement in the TCG to open the entry and exit checkpoints in Shchastia and Zolote on 10 November, the checkpoints remain closed on the non-government controlled side. We therefore urge the Russian Federation to fulfil the agreement, and the conclusions of the Normandy Summit last December, by using its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to ensure that these new check points, as well as all remaining, are opened.

We commend Ukraine for building another administrative service centre at the entry and exit check point in Novotroitske which we understand will include a post office, a bank office and a police station. This very welcome measure should further ease the lives of the population living in the nearby non-government controlled areas.

We highly value the work on the ground of the Special Monitoring Mission. The SMM must have, in accordance with its mandate, unhindered access to the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, including Crimea. We remain concerned by the continuing restrictions on its freedom of movement, which occur predominantly in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations, in particular in those adjacent to the Ukraine-Russia State border outside the control of the Ukrainian government. This is why the EU Member States are supporting the respective Ministerial Council draft decision, now being co-sponsored by 34 participating States. We call on all participating States to constructively engage in the negotiations on this draft with a view to its adoption at the Tirana Ministerial Council. We reiterate that all impediments to the SMM's work, including attempts to destroy SMM's assets, are unacceptable. We urge Russia to use its considerable and undeniable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to remove all restrictions on the SMM.

Although there have been relatively fewer ceasefire violations in the last four months, we still note some concerning trends: there are frequently military personnel present within the Stanytsia Luhanska, Zolote and Petrivske disengagement zones, and the SMM reports almost daily about weapons in violation of withdrawal lines in the region. The SMM has also observed new trenches and extensions to existing ones, which were first seen after the implementation of the ceasefire regime in July. In addition, the vast majority of ceasefire violations are happening in areas close to the Donetsk Filtration Station which is critical to the supply of water to both sides of the contact line. There are also occasional provocations which continue to cause casualties among Ukrainian military personnel, for example last Thursday and yesterday near Avdiivka. These reports show how fragile the security situation is. The EU regrets the decree signed by the Russian President Vladimir Putin on 4 November which facilitates the recognition by the Russian Federation of documents and vehicle registrations selectively issued to citizens and permanent residents of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions. This constitutes yet another attempt by Russia to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. We expect Russia to refrain from actions that run counter to the Minsk agreements and impede the full reintegration of the non-Government controlled areas into Ukraine.

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 the 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 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*, 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.

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