



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1144 Vienna, 4 May 2017

EU statement on “Russia’s Ongoing Aggression Against Ukraine and Illegal Annexation of Crimea”

The European Union continues to support all steps necessary to conduct a swift, thorough and impartial investigation into the tragic incident near Pryshyb, an area held by Russia-backed separatists, where one member of an SMM patrol was killed and two were injured, most probably by a mine on a road which had been declared safe by those holding the area. Responsibility for the security and safety of the SMM lies with the parties. Accountability is key, and we urge Russia to exercise its influence over the separatists it backs to provide access to carry out a swift, thorough and impartial investigation ensuring that those responsible will be held to account. The “culture of impunity”, as described by Chief Monitor Apakan last week, must end.

We condemn that the SMM continues, despite repeated assurances to the contrary, to face significant restrictions on the ground. In separatist-held areas, restrictions are enforced in a particularly aggressive manner, and the level of intimidation and targeted disinformation has increased in recent months. We stress the need for the sides to fully abide by their commitments and afford the SMM full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including to the Ukraine-Russia state border. We reiterate our full support to the continued work of the SMM and condemn any attempt to threaten, harass or intimidate SMM monitors or prevent them from carrying out their duties or to destroy or disable OSCE assets. We condemn in this regard recent incidents in Molodizhne, Kruta Hora and Stanytsia Luhanska disengagement area where monitors observed explosions and shots in striking distance to their position.

The security situation remains volatile and the environment impairs the Mission’s ability to monitor developments. We therefore again call on all sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect of the ceasefire, the withdrawal of all Minsk-

proscribed weapons, complete disengagement and to ensure comprehensive mine action. Continued civilian casualties caused by unexploded ordnance and mines underlines the urgency of marking, fencing and clearing contaminated areas by the sides. We stress again that mine action is their responsibility and express our strong regret that clear commitments to this end have not been abided by. Full humanitarian access to areas held by Russia-backed separatists must also be ensured, in line with international humanitarian principles. These are important steps toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these fundamental principles must be restored.

We call on the sides in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups to agree on steps toward the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. This includes the modalities of local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in full 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 first be met. We also urge the sides to move forward on the release of hostages and illegally detained persons without delay.

We remain firm in our 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 in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility and to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. We again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists, and we remain deeply concerned about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in separatist-held areas. 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 recognise these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, 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 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*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, 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, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.