



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1314 Vienna, 20 May 2021

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

We are concerned about the very tense security situation at the contact line in eastern Ukraine. Last week, the SMM reported a two-fold increase in ceasefire violations and an increase in the use of weapons that should have been withdrawn according to the Minsk Agreements. We were saddened to see that the Mission reported three civilian casualties all due to mines and UXOs as well as damage to civilian property, including a water-pumping station, a hospital and a school. In this context, we urge the sides to adhere to the ceasefire and to reach an agreement on the 19 de-mining zones which is still being blocked in the TCG, despite Ukraine’s readiness to start immediate implementation. We also commend Ukraine for its restraint in responding to military provocations by the Russia-backed armed formations, despite the regrettable and unacceptable death toll among its military personnel.

It is also concerning that the negotiations to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict is obstructed by attempts by Russia to legitimize the so-called “people’s republics” in eastern Ukraine in the Trilateral Contact Group. The Minsk Protocol signed by the Russian Federation is unambiguous in stating that the TCG consists of representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE. Russia has therefore clearly and legally accepted its responsibility for the peaceful settlement of the conflict and the implementation of the Minsk agreements. In addition, the Package of Measures only provides for consultations with so-called “representatives of the certain areas in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions” with regard constitutional amendments and the special order of local self-government (special status) as per paragraph 9 and 11, as well as the law on local elections as per paragraph 12. The Minsk Package of Measures does

not mention the necessity to establish a "direct dialogue" between Kyiv and the non-government controlled areas. On this basis, we regret that Russia continues to portray itself as a neutral mediator. Instead, we call on Russia, as a party to the conflict, to engage constructively in the TCG discussions and to implement the Minsk Agreements in full.

We regret that Russia seems to be accelerating its policy of issuing passports in a simplified and selective manner to Ukrainian citizens in the non-government controlled parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the run-up to the September Duma elections in Russia, including by using pressure on local residents, as reported by organisations on the ground. This is even more disturbing in view of the statements attributed to high-level Russian officials evoking possible Russian military action as an alleged need to protect the interests of these newly passportized citizens. We reiterate that this policy contradicts the spirit and the objectives of the Minsk agreements and constitutes a clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty.

We recall that the Minsk Protocol calls for permanent monitoring of the border and verification by the OSCE, and that the Minsk Package of Measures includes the commitment to reinstate full Ukrainian control over its entire international border. The SMM must have safe, secure, unconditional and unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea, with a view to the implementation of its mandate to its full extent. We regret that another SMM long-range UAV was damaged on 17 May when undertaking an emergency landing due to jamming. Those responsible must be held accountable, both politically and financially.

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 fuelling 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 UKRAINE, 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.