

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Permanent Council No 1115  
Vienna, 13 October 2016**

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

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The European Union remains concerned by the volatile and tense situation along the line of contact. Although some progress has been achieved in Zolote and Petrivske, we urge the sides to fully and verifiably implement the Framework Agreement on Disengagement of Forces and Hardware without further delay, including ensuring safe and unhindered access for the SMM by fully demining and depolluting the areas and their surroundings. We expect this to be swiftly followed by full military disengagement in more areas. We reiterate our call on the sides to strictly adhere to the ceasefire and verifiably withdraw all Minsk-regulated weapons. These are necessary steps in order to ensure a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

The SMM’s monitors and their remote monitoring equipment continue to face significant obstacles, with 25 restrictions occurring in government-controlled areas and 32 in areas held by Russia-backed separatists between 26 September and 2 October. Moreover, and in clear violation of the Framework Agreement, the SMM’s access to the disengagement areas remains limited and SMM drones have been jammed. SMM monitors are regularly threatened, particularly in separatist-held areas, as documented by four of the five SMM spot reports this year on such incidents. On 7 October, a monitor was forced to leave a SMM camera site in a separatist-held area after being threatened by an armed man. Although repeatedly informed of these incidents by the SMM, the JCCC has yet to intervene effectively on the SMM’s behalf and few, if any, steps have been taken to investigate the incidents and hold the culprits accountable. This is unacceptable. The SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border. To this end, we welcome the informal briefing tomorrow on the issue of

transparency along the Ukrainian-Russian State border and hope this will be followed by concrete steps in the near future.

Mr. Chair, we again 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 agreeing on the modalities of holding local elections in certain areas 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. We also reiterate our call on the sides to agree on further exchanges of prisoners and detainees and to open the vehicle crossing point in Zolote to ease the passage of civilians across the line of contact.

We remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and yet again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet those commitments in full. Moreover, we again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists. The ceasefire must be respected. All Minsk-regulated weapons must be withdrawn and foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential. We reiterate our deep concern 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.

Mr. Chair, we are following closely the developments following the arrest of Ukrainian journalist Roman Sushchenko upon his arrival in Russia on 30 September. We note that statements of both the International and European Federations of Journalists have called for the release of Mr. Sushchenko. We call on Russia to respect Mr. Sushchenko's right to consular access, adequate treatment and legal counsel, and note with concern that consular access and legal counsel have only been granted with unacceptable delay. We call on Russia to respect its international commitments, including those within the OSCE, and release without further delay all illegally held

Ukrainian citizens, both in Russia and on the illegally annexed peninsula of Crimea. We will continue to follow these cases closely.

The EU 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 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 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.