



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1135  
Vienna, 2 March 2017**

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

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"Undesirable". That was the word armed men near separatist-held Vuhlehirsk used on 17 February as they turned away a SMM patrol access. Regrettably, several serious incidents in the past weeks have only strengthened the impression that this word captures a prevailing attitude: in the past two weeks alone SMM monitors have been threatened and fired at on more than one occasion in areas held by Russia backed separatists. A particularly egregious incident occurred in Yasynuvata on 24 February, when armed men held SMM monitors at gunpoint, seized a mini-UAV and subsequently fired at the patrol. We have also seen further examples of blatant, yet harmful, disinformation targeting the SMM, and we note that the clear majority of access restrictions remain in separatist-held areas. Such actions put our monitors at risk, hamper efforts to resolve the conflict and prevent the SMM from attaining the full picture of developments on the ground. This must stop immediately. Those responsible must be held accountable. We expect the JCCC to take swift action to this end. We deplore the actions of the separatists and call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to fully comply with commitments undertaken. The SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine. We also take this opportunity to reiterate the importance of a timely extension of the SMM's mandate and adoption of an adequate budget.

Unilateral actions jeopardize efforts to resolve the crisis in and around Ukraine. We reiterate these words by the Chairmanship-in-Office as we strongly condemn the decision by the Russian Federation to recognise civil documents issued in certain parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions which are not under Ukrainian government control. This decision clearly contradicts the spirit of the Minsk agreements and seriously undermines Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Alongside the rise in intimidation of the SMM, the security situation has deteriorated further, particularly in the area between Avdiivka, Yasynuvata and Donetsk airport, where fighting using Minsk-proscribed heavy weapons continues. We are deeply concerned by the damage to the Donetsk water filtration station caused by shelling, rendering inoperable a station which supplies over half a million people with water. Moreover, as verified by the SMM, the shelling damaged the roof of the station's chlorine storage facility, placing civilians and the environment in harm's way. We recall the statement by the Trilateral Contact Group on 26 February on the need to ensure the immediate repair of the water filtration station, facilitated by safe and secure SMM access to the area, and will be monitoring the sides' follow-up closely.

We also call on the sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect of the ceasefire, the withdrawal of all Minsk-proscribed weapons, complete disengagement, full, safe and unhindered SMM access – including along the Ukrainian-Russian border - and full humanitarian access in line with international humanitarian principles. These are important steps toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments, respect for which must be restored. We strongly support the continued efforts by the Normandy Format to this end.

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 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. As Foreign Minister Gabriel said in his capacity as host of the meeting of the Normandy Format on the margin of the Munich Security Conference, "without a cease-fire and without the withdrawal of heavy weapons, the political process cannot gain momentum."

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 assume its responsibility in this regard 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. We recall that 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, and we call again on OSCE participating States to consider similar non-recognition measures in line with the UNGA Resolution 68/262.

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 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.