



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No 1149 Vienna, 8 June 2017

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

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It is with deep frustration and regret that the European Union notes that the unacceptable restrictions and aggressive intimidation of the SMM that have been occurring, with disturbing frequency, in areas held by Russia-backed separatists show no signs of easing. In the period of 22-28 May, besides areas contaminated with mines and unexploded ordnance, the SMM’s freedom of movement was restricted exclusively in separatist-held areas and as many as 14 times, including three denials of access. The SMM’s difficulties obtaining information also persist: for example, hospital staff in separatist-held areas continue to withhold information on civilian casualties, citing that they require written permission from separatists. Ironically, while separatists are thus failing to ensure the SMM access to fulfil its tasks, they are also publically accusing the SMM of not being present to verify violations and civilian casualties. In some instances, separatists have even accused the SMM of bias: on 27 May, an armed separatist filmed an SMM patrol while accusing the SMM of revealing the separatists’ positions to the Ukrainian side. Such ongoing disinformation campaigns continue to pose a serious challenge as they encourage hostility towards the SMM.

The EU once again condemns these consistent attempts to undermine the SMM and recalls that the SMM, in line with its mandate, must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including to the Ukraine-Russia state border. We urge Russia to exercise its influence over the separatists it backs to put an end to the restrictions and intimidation and to ensure accountability. We call on the sides to ensure a safe and conducive environment for the SMM to fulfil its mandate. Without proper and unimpeded monitoring by the SMM, there cannot be a credible and verified improvement of the security situation, which is the basis

for further progress on the political track of the peace process. We reiterate our full support to the SMM, its mandate and especially to its brave and dedicated monitors.

Meanwhile, the security situation in eastern Ukraine remains volatile and unpredictable. Even with the SMM's continued patrolling restrictions, the Mission is registering large numbers of ceasefire violations, damage to civilian infrastructure and civilian casualties. The humanitarian cost of the conflict remains high, and civilians pay the price. In the period of 22-28 May, the SMM confirmed nine civilian casualties and registered shelling in the vicinity of schools, posing a specific danger to children's lives. The damage of critical civilian infrastructure also presents a risk to the livelihood of civilians. We are deeply concerned by the reports on 3 June that the water supply to Avdiivka had been cut off, allegedly due to shelling. We join Chief Monitor Apakan in his call on the sides to protect critical civilian infrastructure and, by extension, the environment.

We welcome the locally agreed ceasefire through the JCCC for International Children's Day on 1 June. Although ceasefire violations were recorded that day, the relative calm on 1 June is a signal that the JCCC can be instrumental if the will is present. We 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. We expect all sides to live up to their responsibility to mark, fence and clear areas contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance, and we once again underline the need for the JCCC to fulfil its coordination role. These are important steps towards full implementation of the Minsk agreements. Respect for fundamental OSCE principles and commitments must be restored, and the European Union will continue to hold the sides accountable, assessing their compliance by their deeds, not by their words.

We also 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 ending the dire humanitarian situation in the conflict zone as well as 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 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 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.