



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1118 Vienna, 10 November 2016

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

The European Union remains deeply concerned by the highly volatile situation along the line of contact in eastern Ukraine, with well over 2000 explosions noted by the SMM between 3-6 November alone. With overall violence back at the high level last observed in August, we urge the sides to reverse this deterioration by taking immediate steps to fully adhere to the ceasefire, verifiably disengage and withdraw Minsk-proscribed heavy weapons and ensure full and safe humanitarian access.

The SMM’s monitors and their remote monitoring equipment continue to face significant obstacles, particularly in areas held by Russia-backed separatists. The SMM’s access remains restricted in all three disengagement areas, particularly due to the continued presence of mines and unexploded ordnance, which the sides have yet to clear or fence off. We reiterate our firm position that the SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border. The SMM must not be prevented from setting up Forward Patrol Bases in Amvrosivka and Antratsiyt. This would be a necessary step towards giving the SMM better conditions for monitoring, including in border areas.

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 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 the exchange of all hostages and illegally detained persons and to agree on steps to prevent civilian casualties and reduce the risk to critical civilian infrastructure along 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 in order to achieve a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. 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.

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.

Yesterday, the EU added 6 members of the Russian Federation State Duma "elected" from the illegally annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the list of persons subject to restrictive measures for actions undermining Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence.

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 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.