



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1271 Vienna, 11 June 2020

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

The European Union remains concerned about the security situation for the Special Monitoring Mission. As we heard from the SMM Chief Monitor Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik on Monday, the current restrictions on their freedom of movement, introduced under the pretext of COVID-19, continue to cause administrative, human resources and security challenges for the Mission and are seriously threatening its effective functioning. The situation could become unsustainable in the next weeks. These restrictions, set up by the Russia-backed armed formations, are unacceptable as the SMM was set up as a single Mission and its mandate grants full access to the whole territory of Ukraine. It should not be broken up into separate parts, as described by the Chief Monitor. We call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formation it backs in order to lift these undue restrictions and to implement the Minsk agreements.

Additionally, we stress that the Mission’s technical assets are of vital importance for it to be able to effectively monitor in the whole territory of Ukraine, especially in the eastern part. In this regard, we condemn the incident on 2 June when a new and expensive SMM camera system in the non-government controlled area, near the Petrivske disengagement area, was intentionally destroyed by small arms fire from a close distance. We are strongly concerned about the Mission’s significant reduction of capacity to monitor this disengagement area, as stressed by the Chief Monitor and call on those responsible to refrain from attacks on the Mission’s equipment. Those

responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

The relevance of technical assets was also shown in the night of 4-5 June, when an SMM long-range UAV observed convoys of trucks, some in military style, entering and exiting Ukraine on a dirt road, in a non-government-controlled area of the Luhansk region where there are no border crossing facilities. SMM also observed two convoys on 5 June standing near dirt roads close to the border with the Russian Federation where there are no crossing facilities. This reporting demonstrates that the SMM is an invaluable source of information on what is really happening on the ground. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to ensure that the mandate of the SMM is respected, that the technical assets of the SMM are not damaged or destroyed and that the relevant parts of the Ukrainian-Russian border is properly controlled on the Russian side, in order to support implementing the Minsk agreements.

In times of increasing tensions, it is more important than ever to advance the work in the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy Format, which we fully support. The restoration of the full sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders is key for a sustainable resolution of the conflict. We encourage the TCG, with its representatives from Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE, to achieve tangible progress in their discussions on a recommitment to a full and comprehensive ceasefire, the identification of further crossing points and disengagement areas, exchange of conflict-related detainees and an updated demining plan. We take positive note of Ukraine's decision to increase its political representation in the TCG. We commend the Ukrainian leadership for their constructive approach and the political will to negotiate an end to the conflict and call on Russia to act likewise, including within the Trilateral Contact Group.

We reiterate our utmost concern about the Russian presidential decree of April 2019 granting citizenship to inhabitants of the non-government controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in a simplified procedure. We recall the EU guidance on territorial competence and non-recognition of passports issued on the basis of this decree and call on other participating States not to recognize them either.

The European Union remains deeply concerned about the dire situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Ukraine's Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol since its illegal annexation by Russia, especially for persons belonging to ethnic or religious minorities. Over the past six years, residents of the peninsula, and in particular the Crimean Tatars, have been facing systematic restrictions of the human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association, religion or belief. On 4 June, the so-called "Crimean Supreme Court" sentenced Artem Gerasimov to six years in prison for his peaceful Christian worship as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Mr. Gerasimov is the second Jehovah's Witness to be imprisoned in Crimea under Russian law. Additionally, on 8 June, the case of Mustafa Jemilev, the leader of the Crimean Tartar community, was sent by the Russian Investigative Committee to the court. The EU calls for full compliance with international human rights standards in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. We continue to urge the Russian Federation to ensure unimpeded access to international human rights monitoring missions and human rights non-governmental organisations to Crimea.

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 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 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 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*, 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.