



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council N°1093 Vienna, 17 March 2016

EU Statement on Russia's Ongoing Aggression against Ukraine and Violations of OSCE Principles and Commitments

Tomorrow, two years will have passed since the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation. We will not recognise this illegal act and continue to condemn this violation of international law. It remains a direct challenge to international security, with grave implications for the international legal order that protects the unity and sovereignty of states. It also contravenes Russia's commitments under the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter which lays down the normative foundation of the European security order. Moreover, Russia's illegal annexation violates the Budapest Memorandum and the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation between Russia and Ukraine.

The European Union 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 reverse moves that contravene these principles.

We remain committed to fully implementing our non-recognition policy of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation, including through restrictive measures. We call on OSCE participating States to consider similar non-recognition measures in line with UN General Assembly Resolution 68/262. We recall the decision on 10 March 2016 by the Council of the European Union to prolong until 15 September 2016 the individual restrictive measures targeting 146 people and 37 entities over actions against Ukraine's territorial integrity.

We also reiterate our deep concern at Russia's military build-up in the Crimean peninsula and, as reported by the ODIHR and HCNM jointly and most recently the

UNHCHR, the deteriorating human rights situation, including for the Crimean Tatar community. All allegations of gross violations of human rights including torture, arbitrary detentions and the denial of rights to freedom of expression, of assembly and association and of religion or belief must be thoroughly investigated and those responsible brought to justice. We urge the Russian Federation to comply with its international human rights commitments including those of the OSCE. We reiterate our call for the recommendations put forth in the joint ODIHR and HCNM Human Rights Assessment Mission report on Crimea to be implemented. Full, free and unrestricted access for all international human rights actors to monitor the situation throughout Ukraine, including Crimea and Sevastopol, continues to be paramount.

Chairperson, as reported by the SMM, the past week saw a sharp increase in the number of ceasefire violations, constituting a further deterioration of an already fragile situation. The continuing increased use of heavy weapons is of particular concern. We call for immediate steps to halt and reverse this deterioration. Furthermore, all sides must unconditionally and verifiably withdraw all Minsk-regulated weapons, and the SMM must be given full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border. These are necessary steps to reach a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Regrettably, significant restrictions on the SMM's freedom of movement persist, especially in areas held by Russia-backed separatists. SMM UAVs are also frequently jammed or shot at. This is unacceptable and in violation of the Minsk agreements. All restrictions must be lifted without further delay.

We encourage the participants in the Trilateral Working Group to make swift and much needed progress towards a sustainable political solution. In particular, we call on the sides in the Political Working Group to agree on the modalities for local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, relevant OSCE standards and to be monitored by ODIHR. Established conditions must be met for local elections to take place, including ensuring security and access for ODIHR. Moreover, we call on the sides in the Humanitarian Working Group to agree on further exchanges of hostages and unlawfully detained persons and on full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to separatist-held areas.

The European Union remains firm in its call on all parties to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and also yet again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet those commitments. The duration of the European Union's economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements. 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 concern about information regarding the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia.

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, 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.