



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1202
Vienna, 15 November 2018**

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

Mr. Chairperson, the so-called “elections” that took place on 11 November, organised by Russia-backed armed formations were yet another brazen violation of international and Ukrainian law and the Minsk agreements and we consider them null and void. By supporting these and by not using its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full the Russian Federation is violating the Minsk agreements and undermining efforts to resolve the conflict it started and continues to fuel. We reiterate that the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements remains key to reaching a sustainable political solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

The EU stands firmly behind Chief Monitor Ambassador Apakan, who on 2 November sent a letter to the signatories of the Minsk agreements expressing his concern over the downing of the LR UAV on 27 October. This is the ninth SMM long-range UAV to have been lost. At the last PC we pointed to the fact that strong indications suggest that the Russian Federation and the armed formations that it backs bear the responsibility of the downing of this LR UAV. We are regrettably yet to receive any substantial explanation from the Russian Federation. The SMM has conducted numerous patrols in the area where the UAV presumably came down but has not been able to locate any wreckage. In this context we are extremely concerned that another LR UAV experienced severe jamming on 9 November while flying over Korsun, an area held by Russia-backed armed formations. We also condemn the shooting at a Mini-UAV by

UKR forces near Lopaskyne on 1 November and near Novotoshkivske on 11 November. We repeat that the SMM including its technical equipment must be assured safe, secure and unimpeded access throughout Ukraine, including the Crimean peninsula and along the Ukraine-Russia border. We once again underline that the operational, security and financial consequences of all obstructions must be assessed. Those responsible for any willful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially. We welcome the action taken on this issue by the SMM as reported by Ambassador Apakan at the special meeting of the Permanent Council on 12 November and would appreciate further information when possible.

According to reports, the Donetsk Filtration Station has again been under severe shelling posing risks to the workers operating the station, civilians depending on its water, the environment as well as the SMM monitors who continue facilitating the operation of the Station, including through monitoring the security situation in the vicinity. We strongly urge the sides to establish and respect safety zones around critical infrastructure.

We are concerned to see that ceasefire violations increased by almost 30% in the week of 29 October-4 November. The SMM recorded no less than 10,300 ceasefire violations during the reporting period and in comparison to the previous week nearly three times as many instances of the use of heavy weapons that should have been withdrawn. The SMM also continued to note heightened tensions along the contact line near and within the Zolote disengagement area, where SMM UAVs observations show the sides' positions being as close as 200m to each other. UAV imagery also revealed that the sides are fortifying recently built positions on the edges of Zolote-4/Rodina and Zolote-5/Mykhailivka. Mr. Chairperson, this is the area where two civilians were killed by an explosion on 18 October when they were reportedly attempting to restore electricity in the village Vilnyi, where the security situation is extremely tense and

heavy shelling occurs on a daily basis. We strongly encourage the sides to disengage and withdraw heavy weapons in accordance with their commitments under the Minsk agreements and in the TCG. In this context we echo President Macron and Chancellor Merkel in welcoming the announcement made by Ukrainian President Poroshenko on 11 November to implement disengagement in Stanytsia Luhanska.

We remain concerned about Russia's ongoing militarization of the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov and the excessive inspections causing delays to commercial ships. This together with the militarization of the Crimean Peninsula has a severe negative impact on the entire Black Sea region and beyond. We underline our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, including its territorial waters.

The exchange of detainees between the sides that took place at the end of 2017 was an important confidence building measure and we therefore encourage the sides to pursue another such exchange by the end of 2018. In that regard we welcome the firm support for this path expressed by Chancellor Merkel, President Macron and President Poroshenko.

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. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. 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. We again call on Russia to immediately stop fueling the conflict by providing financial and military support to the armed formations, and we remain deeply concerned about information on 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 the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN 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.