



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1038 Vienna, 5 February 2015

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

The European Union strongly condemns the continued separatist offensive in parts of eastern Ukraine, notably around Debaltseve. We join the call by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on all actors in and around the Debaltseve area to establish a local temporary truce for a minimum of three days, taking immediate effect. We support the efforts of the Special Monitoring Mission and Ambassador Tagliavini to pursue this as a first step to securing a sustainable ceasefire and full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The fighting in eastern Ukraine is causing great human suffering and undermines all efforts aimed at a political solution. The shelling of civilians, wherever it happens, is a grave violation of international humanitarian law. Artillery should immediately be withdrawn from residential areas. We are greatly concerned by the SMM's most recent reports about attacks on residential areas with indications of use of cluster munitions. We call upon all parties to refrain from the use of weapons which produce indiscriminate effects such as cluster munitions. We note the statement by the UN Commissioner for Human Rights that any further escalation will prove catastrophic for the 5.2 million people living in the midst of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

The European Union will continue to actively support all diplomatic efforts conducive to creating a new political impetus, notably those currently ongoing under OSCE auspices, and will engage further as necessary. Full implementation of the Minsk agreements as the basis for a sustainable political solution to the conflict, respecting Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, must remain the focus of such talks. We regret that the two co-signatories of the Minsk agreements from the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk 'People's Republics'

did not attend the meeting in Minsk on 31 January despite personal invitations from the Trilateral Contract Group. We are particularly disappointed that their 'representatives' were not prepared to discuss implementation of a ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons and called for revision of the Minsk agreements.

We note the evidence of continued and growing support given to the separatists by Russia. This underlines Russia's responsibility. We expect Russia to exert its influence and to induce the separatists to stop their hostile actions and fully live up to their commitments under the Minsk agreements. This notably includes the cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the security zone along the line of contact foreseen in the Minsk Memorandum, as urgent first steps. We call on all sides to fully assume their responsibility and to implement their commitments under the Minsk agreements in their entirety. We call in particular on the Russian Federation to condemn the separatists' actions.

Progress must also be made on the withdrawal of illegal and foreign armed groups, military equipment, fighters and mercenaries, freeing all hostages, securing the Ukrainian-Russian border with permanent monitoring by the OSCE, as well as early local elections in parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the framework of the Ukrainian law on interim self-governance and an inclusive national dialogue, notably on issues such as constitutional reform and decentralisation. Re-establishing Ukrainian control of its borders remains essential.

In view of the worsening situation the EU Foreign Ministers agreed last Thursday to extend the restrictive measures targeting persons and entities for threatening or undermining Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity until September 2015. The European Union will continue to closely follow the situation on the ground and the current diplomatic efforts. Further preparatory work is being undertaken on any appropriate action, aiming at ensuring a swift and comprehensive implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine continues to worsen dramatically in the coldest period of the year. We deeply regret that the Russian so-called

humanitarian convoys continue to enter Ukrainian territory, without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities and in clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, without fundamental international humanitarian principles being observed. We urge all parties to fully respect international law, to protect civilians and humanitarian workers and to ensure unhindered access for humanitarian organisations in line with international humanitarian law and principles.

Mr Chairman, at our previous meeting the Russian delegation mistakenly claimed that Russia's so-called 'humanitarian aid' constitutes the only 'line of supply' for people in eastern Ukraine. In fact, around 40 percent of the more than 11 million Euros which the European Commission has already contributed in humanitarian aid go to separatist-held areas. The European Commission has now decided to increase its humanitarian assistance with an additional 15 million Euros to provide support to the most vulnerable conflict-affected populations, including in separatists-held areas. The European Commission also provides support to Ukrainian refugees in Belarus and Russia.

The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We once again urge Russia to recognise by acts these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute 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 Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, 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.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.