



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1104 Vienna, 9 June 2016

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

Last Thursday, yet another downing of an SMM UAV over separatist-held territory added to the rise in intimidation against the SMM and obstruction of the Mission’s work. Rather than helping the SMM ensure the UAV’s retrieval, Russian-backed separatists threatened to shoot down another UAV if one was dispatched to locate the crash site. When the SMM eventually did conduct two UAV flights, it observed a “military-type compound” nearby the presumed crash site. The downed UAV, however, was never recovered. We also remain worried that the SMM’s cameras near the Donetsk airport remain disabled by separatists and note with concern reports of separatists seeking to limit or condition the SMM’s interaction with the local population and journalists.

We welcome the release of an SMM staff member, a Ukrainian citizen who was held in Donetsk and we stress that such acts against members of SMM are unacceptable.

All this undermines the Mission’s ability to carry out its mandate, violates the Minsk agreements and begs the question: What is the SMM being prevented from observing and why? We reiterate our firm position that the SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border and to the illegally annexed Crimea. We recall the recent agreements in the Normandy format to “enhance the authority” of the SMM, to strengthen the effectiveness of the JCCC, and for a rapid response by the JCCC to address impediments confronting the SMM. We call on the sides to ensure this is implemented in practice.

We remain concerned by the continuous fragile and volatile situation in the conflict zone and along the line of contact in particular. We express concern regarding the increased concentration of heavy military equipment in hotspots, including tanks, multiple launch rocket systems and self-propelled howitzers, which violates Minsk

agreements. We are concerned about SMM reports that separatists continue to use populated territories as firing positions. We urge all sides to take immediate steps to disengage, strictly adhere to the ceasefire and ensure an unconditional and verifiable withdrawal of all Minsk-regulated weapons.

We call on the sides in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups to agree on concrete steps that advance the implementation of the Minsk agreements. This includes measures to enhance the security situation including by agreeing on the disengagement plan put forth by the Chief Monitor, deciding on the exchange of prisoners, and agreeing on the modalities of 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 welcome the latest report by the Office UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Ukraine. The report further documents the tragic consequences of the crisis: more than 30.000 casualties, millions forced to flee their homes, the breakdown of the rule of law in separatist-held areas and severe human rights violations on both sides of the line of contact, including systematic violations of due process and fair trial rights. The report also portrays the sharply deteriorating human rights situation in Crimea since Russia's illegal annexation and we join the OHCHR in calling for immediate, unfettered access for international human rights organisations to the Crimean peninsula.

We remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments, in order to ensure a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments and based on full respect for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. 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 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 and all foreign armed formations,

military equipment and mercenaries fully withdrawn from the territory of Ukraine. The return of Ukrainian control over its entire state border is paramount. We reiterate our deep concern about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in separatist-held areas.

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.

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 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.