



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1200  
Vienna, 8 November 2018**

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

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Mr. Chairperson, last week the EU and others strongly condemned the downing of an SMM long-range UAV on 27 October near Nyzhnokrynske, an area held by Russia-backed armed formations. As also underlined by Germany and France as members of the Normandy Format last week, preliminary findings suggest that the Russian Federation and the armed formations it backs bear the responsibility for the targeting and downing of this LR UAV. Given the continuous restrictions to its freedom of movement particularly in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations, the SMM technical equipment remains key to SMM monitoring of the security provisions of the Minsk Agreements. The SMM must be assured safe, secure and unimpeded access throughout Ukraine, including the Crimean peninsula and along the Ukraine/Russia border. We repeat 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 must be held accountable, both politically and financially. In this context, Russia and the armed formations it backs must facilitate the recovery of the lost UAV or its wreckage and its return to its lawful owner, the SMM, as well as ensure compensation for the damage incurred.

The SMM continues to face other restrictions of its freedom of movement and impediments to the implementation of its mandate. In addition to restrictions posed by mines and unexploded ordnance including in the disengagement areas, the Mission’s freedom of movement was restricted 21 times during the reporting period of 22-28 October. 19 of these incidents took place in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations.

The vast majority of restrictions take place in areas of southern Donetsk region, where Russia-backed armed formations consistently deny the SMM access to settlements along road M14, near the Azov Sea, including Novoazovsk and Bezimenne.

Also, in this context we reiterate our concern for Russia's ongoing militarization of the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov and the excessive inspections causing delays of commercial ships. We underline our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, including its territorial waters.

The EU condemns the planned holding of so-called "elections" as announced by the Russia-backed armed formations and scheduled for 11 November. If carried out, they would be yet another brazen violation of international law and the Minsk Agreements and would thus be considered null and void. The Minsk Agreements provide for local elections to be held in certain areas in Donbas within the framework of the Ukrainian legislation once proper security conditions are in place, in accordance with relevant OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. In this context we call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full and not undermine them.

Mr. Chairperson, the EU is deeply concerned to learn that positions of Russia-backed armed formations have moved further west in at least two locations as reported by the SMM. On 21 October, an SMM long-range UAV spotted two sets of trenches seen for the first time 600m and 1km respectively further west than previously observed positions a few kilometres north-west of non-government-controlled Stavky in Donetsk region. Also on 21 October, an SMM mid-range UAV spotted for the first time about 300m of trenches assessed as belonging to Russia-backed armed formations about 180m further west of previously observed positions west of non-government-controlled Horlivka.

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, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.