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**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1152  
Vienna, 6 July 2017**

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**EU statement on “Russia’s Ongoing Aggression Against  
Ukraine and Illegal Annexation of Crimea”**

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The security situation remains highly volatile, marked by reoccurring spikes in heavy fighting, despite the latest reconfirmation of the ceasefire, the so-called “Harvest Ceasefire” from 24 June to 31 August 2017 initially proposed by local communities in southern Donetsk and subsequently supported by the Trilateral Contact Group. We therefore again call on all sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect of the ceasefire, the withdrawal of all Minsk-proscribed weapons, complete disengagement and to ensure comprehensive mine action. Full humanitarian access to areas held by Russia-backed separatists must also be ensured, in line with international humanitarian principles. These are important steps toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these fundamental principles must be restored.

Following further egregious incidents in recent days, including threats levelled at the SMM on 29 June by balaclava-clad armed men in separatist-held Vesela Hora, we again condemn the intimidation and restrictions of the SMM, which continue to occur primarily in separatist-held areas. It is high time that those responsible are brought to justice. We also underline yet again that the security of the SMM is the responsibility of those in effective control of the area in which the SMM operates. We urge Russia to exercise its influence over the separatists it backs to put an end to the restrictions and intimidation and to ensure accountability. Assurances by the Russian delegation and in the Trilateral Contact Group that steps are being taken to ensure the safety of monitors in separatist-held areas are contradicted by the difficult reality that monitors continue to face on the ground, including the temporary withdrawal of armed guards at the SMM office in Donetsk.

The SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including to the Ukraine-Russia state border. It is also vital that the security of SMM offices is not compromised. We note the reestablishment of security arrangements at the SMM office in Donetsk City and call on the JCCC to maintain their presence as long as requested by the SMM. We welcome the opening of the Forward Patrol Base in Popasna which will further enhance SMM's monitoring capability. However, we regret that on the morning of 30 June, the SMM was forced to temporarily evacuate from this Base after extensive shelling overnight. Without proper and unimpeded monitoring by the SMM, there cannot be a verified improvement of the security situation, which is the basis for further progress on the political track.

The sides in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups must agree on steps toward the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. This includes the modalities of local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in full 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 first be met.

We remain firm in our 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 in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility and to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. We again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists, and we remain deeply concerned about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in separatist-held areas. 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 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 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\*, 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 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.