



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1120  
Vienna, 24 November 2016**

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

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Three years and three days ago, courageous Ukrainians gathered on Kiev’s Maidan Square to peacefully voice their support for Ukraine’s European aspirations. Today, at the EU-Ukraine Summit in Brussels, the EU has reaffirmed its commitment to support Ukraine’s democratic consolidation and ambitious reform process.

Regrettably, this takes place against the backdrop of an alarming deterioration of the security situation along the line of contact in eastern Ukraine. Intense use of heavy weapons, including multiple rocket launch systems, has resulted in a deeply worrying increase in civilian casualties. We are also concerned by the rise in fighting near Mariupol, which further heightens the risk to civilians.

We again call on the sides to show restraint, respect the ceasefire, fully and verifiably withdraw all Minsk-proscribed weapons, disengage, ensure humanitarian access and full, safe and unhindered SMM access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border. This is an important step in order to move toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

It remains indefensible that the SMM’s monitors and their remote monitoring equipment continue to face significant obstacles and regular intimidation, particularly in areas held by Russia-backed separatists. This prevents the SMM from fully discharging the mandate all participating States have agreed to. Moreover, it prevents the SMM from having the risk reducing and confidence-building effect the Mission can have on the ground, as demonstrated on numerous occasions, by assuring both sides that Minsk-violations will be observed and reported. We reiterate our call on the JCCC to conduct an effective

investigation into cases of intimidation and obstruction of the SMM, and to ensure an adequate and systematic rapid response, when called upon by the SMM.

We again call on the sides in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups to agree on steps toward the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. This includes the modalities of holding 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 call on the sides to fully implement the disengagement of troops and hardware at the three existing disengagement areas and to swiftly define additional disengagement areas, to agree on the release of hostages and illegally detained persons and on steps to prevent civilian casualties and reduce the risk to civilian infrastructure.

We remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full. 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 ceasefire must be respected. All Minsk-regulated weapons must be withdrawn and foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential in order to achieve a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We reiterate our deep concern 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, 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 UKRAINE, 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.