



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1318 Vienna, 3 June 2021

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

Madam Chair, the Minsk Package of Measures includes a commitment to reinstate full Ukrainian control over its entire international border. Effective and comprehensive monitoring of this border is therefore an integral part of a sustainable political solution to the conflict. We therefore recall our support for a significant expansion of the Border Observer Mission to all border crossings on the Russia-Ukraine State border as well as to monitor between these border crossings. We are disappointed that, due to the position of the Russian Federation, no consensus was possible on the customary four-month extension of the Observer Mission. It was with reluctance that we accepted the reduction of the Mission’s mandate to two months last week. We believe that the reduction will have an adverse effect on the Mission’s planning of operations and effective management and is a step backwards in terms of finding a sustainable peaceful solution to the conflict.

Given that it has now been over two months since the Russian Federation began its unusual military build-up along its borders with Ukraine and in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula, we regret that Russia has still not engaged meaningfully under the Vienna Document Risk Reduction Mechanism invoked by Ukraine. In order to dispel tensions, we urge Russia to meet its commitments under the Vienna Document and to provide more transparency on the remaining forces and equipment and the process of their planned withdrawal.

We deplore the two-fold increase in explosions last week and regret that it has resulted in more civilian casualties, including a fatality and, again, damage to civilian property. We thank the SMM for their thematic report on the impact of mines and unexploded ordnance and other explosive objects in the conflict area. It is saddening to read that from November 2019 to March 2021, the mission corroborated 76 civilian casualties, including 20 fatalities, due to mines and UXOs, mainly men and boys, but also women and girls. These are now the primary cause of death and injury in the conflict area, followed by shelling and small-arms fire. It is unacceptable that 18 months after the last Normandy Summit in Paris, the final agreement on the 19-demining zones is still blocked within the TCG, despite Ukraine's readiness to start immediate implementation.

As the resolution of this conflict should remain top priority for the OSCE, we welcome the visit by Secretary General Helga Schmid to Ukraine and note that she also had the opportunity to visit the Novotroitske entry-exit checkpoint. It is regrettable that despite agreements to open the Zolote and Shchastia checkpoints were reached over a year ago, they are still closed on the non-government controlled side. We welcome the steps taken by Ukraine to open these EECPs and to provide services at these checkpoints for the residents of the non-government controlled areas. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to ensure the opening of these two EECPs, as well as the reopening of all other currently closed EECPs, in order to improve the humanitarian situation as well as to restore economic ties and people-to-people contacts.

We continue to reject the Russian narrative of portraying itself as a mediator of an "internal Ukrainian conflict", thus obstructing meaningful discussions in the TCG as well as in the Normandy format. The Minsk Protocol is unambiguous in stating that the TCG consists of representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE. In this respect, Russia's attempts to legitimize the so-called "people's republics" in eastern Ukraine are not constructive. We therefore urge Russia, as a party to the conflict, to take responsibility for its actions and to engage in the discussions on the implementation of the Minsk agreements in good faith.

The EU deplores that the so-called Supreme Court in the illegally annexed Crimea on 21 May sentenced the Crimean native Ivan Yatskin to 11 years in prison on charges

related to 'state treason via spying' and alleged collaboration with Ukraine's Security Service and, on 1 June sentenced the Chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, Rafat Chubarov, to 6 years imprisonment for charges related to his opposition to the illegal annexation of Crimea. Their sentencings illustrate yet again Russia's blatant disregard of its obligations under international law. The EU reiterates its call for the immediate release of all residents of the peninsula who have been unduly detained.

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 the OSCE principles and commitments. 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. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. We again call on Russia to immediately stop fuelling the conflict by providing financial and military support to the armed formations, and we remain deeply concerned about the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations. The duration of the European Union's 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 REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.