



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1110
Vienna, 21 July 2016**

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

The EU is deeply concerned by the further security deterioration along the line of contact. In particular, a recent sharp rise in fighting around Stanytsia Luhanska bridge – an area identified by the sides for disengagement – has driven the number of ceasefire violations in Luhansk region to the highest level in over a year. Meanwhile, the SMM continues to observe the significant use of heavy weapons, often located in and operated from residential areas. We repeat our call on all sides to immediately disengage, strictly adhere to the ceasefire and verifiably withdraw all Minsk-regulated weapons. This is necessary in order to ensure a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

As the fighting continues, the humanitarian costs mount. On July 5, the SMM spoke to hospital personnel who confirmed that three children, aged 1½, 5 and 11, died recently when one of them was playing with a grenade in their home. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights published a report last week estimating that up to 90% of the 2,000 civilian casualties it had recorded were caused by shelling of residential areas. The report further notes the very limited level of accountability for these widespread killings. This culture of impunity must end. We deplore all such indiscriminate shelling, all deployments of weapons in residential areas and the severe restrictions that remain on humanitarian actors in separatist-held areas.

As hostilities increase, SMM’s monitors and remote monitoring equipment still face severe obstacles. From 1 to 17 July, about 90% of the restrictions on the SMM’s access occurred in separatist-held areas. Specifically, in the first two weeks of July, separatists systematically blocked the SMM’s repeated attempts to access the Stanytsia Luhanska bridge. Only on 16 and 17 July were the SMM afforded

conditional and delayed access to the bridge. We reiterate our firm position that the SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border. SMM access is also crucial in order to facilitate disengagement in agreed areas. We call for the swift and full investigation of all incidents involving threats and obstructions of SMM monitors, those responsible should not be allowed to act with impunity.

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 further measures to enhance the security situation, such as agreeing to a complete disengagement plan and on improving the effectiveness of the JCCC, as well as agreeing on 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 also reiterate our call on the sides to agree on further exchanges of hostages and unlawfully detained persons.

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. 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, LIECHTENSTEIN 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.