



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1252 Vienna, 12 December 2019

EU Statement in response to the Update by the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson in Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Sajdik and to the Report by the Chief Monitor of the OSCE SMM to Ukraine, Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik.

Mr. Chairperson, the European Union warmly welcomes Ambassadors Martin Sajdik and Yaşar Halit Çevik to the Permanent Council. We thank both of you and your teams for your tireless efforts in working towards sustainable peace in Ukraine and for your comprehensive briefings.

We welcome that a Normandy Four Summit took place in Paris earlier this week. The fact that the negotiations are occurring at the level of Heads of State and Government after an interval of three years is, in itself, already an important step towards a sustainable political solution of the conflict, in full respect of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine.

We welcome the commitments as identified in the conclusions agreed at the meeting and urge the sides to implement them in good faith. In this context, the EU commends the constructive approach displayed by Ukraine. We call on Russia to exert the considerable influence it has on the ground over the armed formations it backs to see these commitments fully respected.

We welcome the intention to achieve a full, unlimited and comprehensive ceasefire by the end of this year. Such a ceasefire is long overdue. In the last few weeks and months we saw a volatile security situation on the ground, with ceasefire violations persisting, taking its human toll among military personnel and civilian population. This had severe consequences for the civilian population living near the contact line including civilian casualties on a weekly basis. We hope that this new

commitment and the ceasefire support measures will be fully and faithfully implemented and thus would finally put an end to the violence and ease human suffering. In this context we commend the work of the SMM

Following the recent progress in Stanytsia Luhanska, Zolote and Petrivske, we strongly support the idea of designating three additional areas in which to implement disengagement by the end of March 2020. We are also encouraged by the intention to open, in the very near future, new entry-exit check points along the contact line and to achieve the release and exchange of conflict-related detainees, based on the principle of “all for all”, starting with “all identified for all identified” and we welcome the fact that the sides reaffirmed the necessity to grant the International Committee of the Red Cross full and unconditional access to all detained persons.

Today’s meeting is a special one. It is the last appearance of Ambassador Sajdik in the PC, in his function as the CiO Special Representative in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group. Dear Ambassador Sajdik, we thank you wholeheartedly on behalf of the EU and its Member States for your hard work and personal dedication during the last four and half years of tireless service at the forefront of Europe’s most recent conflict which is an open wound on the European continent. We highly commend you for your contribution to bringing forward the peace process for which we once again express our sincere gratitude. We hope that you will continue sharing your knowledge and experience for the benefit of others. It would, for instance, be a pleasure to us if you could share your assessment on the future contribution of the Trilateral Contact group also in relation to what was decided during the Normandy Four meeting in Paris.

We also use this occasion to express our best wishes and encouragement to your successor, Ambassador Heidi Grau. The European Union will fully support Ambassador Grau in this crucial task.

Ambassador Çevik, the EU commends our monitors for their professionalism and dedication in carrying out the Mission’s mandate, often in an extremely challenging and hostile environment. We highlight the efforts of the SMM in monitoring the situation on the ground and facilitating repairs to the critical civilian infrastructure, including the bridge near Stanytsia Luhanska. We are grateful to the SMM for its

active involvement in the disengagement process, as well as its monitoring and verification and the thorough reporting and would be glad to hear more about the SMM's ideas related to the monitoring of further disengagement areas as agreed in the Normandy Four summit.

Ambassador Çevik, the EU welcomes the emphasis that the Normandy Four placed on the safe and secure access of the SMM throughout Ukraine, with a view to the implementation of its mandate to the full extent. The safety and security of the SMM is of primary importance to us. The EU strongly deplores any attempts to harass, intimidate or impede the work of your personnel and condemns the continued threats and restrictions to the SMM, which occur mainly in non-government-controlled areas. The SMM must have safe, secure, unconditional and unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine. This includes the illegally annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and along the Ukraine-Russia state border, to which the SMM is systematically denied access by Russia-backed armed formations. We once again deplore the targeting of SMM assets, including SMM UAVs, by means of signal interference and small arms fire. Those responsible for any willful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

Ambassador Çevik, we highly value your regular and thematic reports. We wish to thank you for the latest thematic report, dated 4 December 2019, on the impact of mines and UXO on the civilian population. The report draws a bleak picture of the harmful effects of the many mines, unexploded ordnance and other explosive objects on civilians. They were the cause of a third of confirmed civilian casualties since January 2018. It is appalling that many of the victims are children, killed or injured from explosive objects found in gardens or fields while playing. In this context, we want to express our appreciation to all involved, including the SMM, for the efforts aimed at raising awareness of the risk of mines and UXO, in particular through mine risk education programmes at schools near the contact line. We also welcome the announcement at the N4 Summit about the development and implementation of an updated demining plan, on the basis of the 2016 TCG decision. We recognise the work that remains to be done, including with the support

of the relevant working groups of the TCG in the demining process to the benefit of the population.

We regret that Russia now regularly persists with the so-called "humanitarian convoys", some of which enter military compounds, in clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as of fundamental international humanitarian principles. We once again call on Russia to join an international mechanism for the delivery of humanitarian aid and to desist from its current practice, which is incompatible with basic principles of international law.

We reiterate our utmost concern about the Russian presidential decrees and their extensions, enabling the simplified granting of Russian citizenship to Ukrainian citizens, which constitutes yet another attack on the sovereignty of Ukraine and runs counter to the spirit and objectives of the Minsk agreements. We do not recognise these passports issued on the basis of these decrees and we call on other OSCE participating States to do likewise. We call on Russia to release all illegally detained Ukrainians, including Crimean Tatars.

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. 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 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 REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN 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, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.