



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council N°1089 Vienna, 11 February 2016

EU Statement on Russia's Ongoing Aggression against Ukraine and Violations of OSCE Principles and Commitments

The European Union is deeply concerned about the increased frequency and intensity of violence in eastern Ukraine, particularly in certain parts of the Donetsk region. Since the end of January, the SMM recorded the highest level of ceasefire violations since September 2015, with more than 1,400 violations registered in Donetsk in one day alone. The recent movement of military positions closer to the line of contact only adds to the tension and mutual distrust. The European Union therefore calls on all sides to honour their commitments and fully implement a sustainable ceasefire and move towards a sustainable political settlement in line with OSCE commitments and principles.

We reiterate our call on all sides to fully and verifiably withdraw all weapons. Weapons proscribed by the Minsk Package of Measures and the Addendum continue to be present in violation of respective withdrawal lines. The SMM continues to observe numerous discrepancies between the actual presence and declared locations of weapons. And we note with concern the SMM's assessment that weapons in separatist-held areas are particularly under-declared.

The vast majority of the restrictions on the SMMs freedom of movement continues to occur in separatist-held areas. We note, in this regard, that the SMM has found a clear correlation between on one hand the number and intensity of ceasefire violations and the presence of proscribed weapons and on the other restrictions on the mission's freedom of movement. All restrictions must be lifted without further delay. Full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian state border and to the illegally annexed Crimea, is crucial for the SMM to fulfil its mandate, as is respect for the Mission's impartiality.

The sustained violence is taking a devastating toll on the civilian population. The increased fighting and ensuing suspension of crossing points, force civilians to chart their own course across the contact line. The presence of military hardware and personnel among civilian buildings is deplorable as it further endangers the local population. We call on all parties to minimise the risk of civilian casualties, including by ensuring safe and unhindered passage for civilians, in line with International Humanitarian principles. We also express concern about the reported explosion outside the office of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis in Kherson on 7 February.

We continue to urge the sides in the Political Working Group to agree on the modalities of local elections in certain parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, relevant OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. Established conditions for ODIHR observation must be met, including ensuring security and access for ODIHR.

The European Union remains firm in its call on all parties to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and also yet again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet their commitments. We recall that the duration of the EU economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements. Foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries must be removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential. We reiterate our concern about reports regarding the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia.

Mr Chair, the European Union 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, to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilise the situation and to 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.