



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1247 Vienna, 14 November 2019

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

Mr. Chairperson, we welcome yesterday's announcement of the completion of the withdrawal of forces and hardware in Petrivske. This step, the overall progress in the two other disengagement areas, as well as the progress in the reconstruction of the bridge near Stanytsia Luhanska should pave the way for further discussions in the TCG and within the Normandy format that should result in concrete measures aimed at putting an end to the violence and to the suffering of civilians who bear the brunt of the conflict. In this regard, we once again commend the Ukrainian leadership for its unwavering commitment to peaceful conflict resolution and call on Russia to act likewise.

Moreover, we deplore the fact that the security situation in the conflict areas continues to be highly volatile, as reported by the SMM, with severe consequences for the civilians living near the contact line. For instance, in non-government controlled Zolote 5, there have already been three casualties this year. We once again urge the sides to respect the ceasefire, in particular around critical civilian infrastructure and settlements. In this regard, we regret the heavy shelling on 7 November of the Donetsk Filtration Station, a vital element of the water infrastructure in the area. Moreover, six civilian properties were shelled in non-government controlled Oleksandrivka and 18 properties and buildings in non-government controlled Yasynuvata only in 2019. We also call on the sides to refrain from positioning military hardware and personnel in civilian settlements.

The SMM remains our source of reliable information of the situation on the ground. We highly value its regular and thematic reports. The safety and security of the SMM is of primary importance. The EU strongly deplores any attempts to harass, intimidate or impede the work of SMM personnel and condemns the continued threats and restrictions to the SMM, which occur predominantly in non-government-controlled areas. This practice hampers the SMM from fulfilling its mandate. 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 targeting of SMM assets, including SMM UAVs, by means of signal interference and small arms fire. On 8 November shots were fired in the direction of an SMM mini-UAV near non-government-controlled Khrystove. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

Last week, another "humanitarian convoy" was observed entering Ukrainian territory from Russia at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point. As in previous cases, this happened without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities and in clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as of fundamental international humanitarian principles. Our concerns are heightened by the recent significant increase in frequency of the so-called Russian "humanitarian convoys". The people in the region are suffering from a conflict which is a consequence of acts of aggression by the Russian Federation and the armed formations it backs against Ukraine. We have not seen any evidence that the humanitarian aid Russia claims to deliver has had any sizeable impact on the population concerned. In addition, humanitarian aid should be delivered through an international mechanism. Let us recall that international mechanisms for humanitarian aid do exist. The EU and its Member States have provided, from the beginning of the conflict, more than 406 MEUR of

humanitarian aid to the region, out of which 45%, i.e. 182 MEUR were destined to the non-government controlled areas. The International Committee of the Red Cross sends on a regular basis trucks with humanitarian aid through the line of contact. The United Nations and some other pS around this table have also been active in providing humanitarian relief to Ukraine. We once again call on Russia to join an international mechanism for the delivery of humanitarian aid and to desist from its current practice incompatible with basic principles of international law.

The EU is gravely concerned with the reported sentencing by the military tribunal of Rostov on November 12, 2019, of 6 Crimean Tatars - Muslim Aliyev, Enver Bekirov, Vadim Siruk, Refat Alimov, Arsen Dzhapparov and Emir-Usein Kuku – for their alleged terrorist activities. This constitutes yet another example of systematic persecution of the representatives of the Crimean Tatar community and its self-governing body, the Mejlis, in the form of threats, harassment and intimidation as well as unlawful searches of their homes and enforced disappearances. The EU regrets that Russia continues to ignore and violate human rights and fundamental freedoms in Ukraine's Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol.

We reiterate our well known positions on the unjustified use of force by Russia near the Kerch Strait and its negative impact in the Black and Azov seas, and on the Russian presidential decrees enabling simplified granting of Russian citizenship to Ukrainian citizens. We repeat our call on Russia, in accordance with the binding order of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, to return the three Ukrainian vessels which they seized, and to ensure unhindered and free passage to and from the Sea of Azov. We call on other OSCE participating States not to recognise the passports issued on the basis of the Russian presidential decrees, which undermine Ukrainian sovereignty and the Minsk agreements.

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*, 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.