



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council N°1166  
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**EU statement in Response to Briefings by the Special Representative in Ukraine of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Martin Sajdik and the Chief Monitor of the OSCE SMM, Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan**

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Ambassadors Sajdik and Apakan, the EU welcomes you to the Permanent Council. We commend you for your perseverance in working to obtain a lasting peace in eastern Ukraine and for your efforts in trying to restore respect for OSCE principles and commitments. Please also extend our appreciation to your staff tirelessly working on the ground in an increasingly difficult and at times even hostile environment.

Ambassador Apakan, last time you spoke at the Permanent Council you had just presented your Response Plan addressing issues raised by the internal audit and external investigation. We value transparency highly and repeat our call for close dialogue with participating states during the implementation of the recommendations of the security management of the Secretariat as well as from previous security expert assessments.

Ambassador Sajdik, the EU remains strong in its support of the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups. We regret that progress in the political working group remains stalled and we call on the sides to abide by their commitments and agree to steps that can move the implementation of the Minsk agreements forward. A sustainable ceasefire is key to further progress.

The situation on the ground is of great concern. Despite the recommitment to the ceasefire on November 15, the number of violations now equals the level before the back-to-school ceasefire. The continued fighting puts civilians at risk and we are seeing fatalities almost every week. But it also affects our OSCE monitors. Ambassador Apakan, the EU supports all efforts to ensure the safety and security of

the SMM and we condemn the restrictions of and impediments to their work, that take place primarily in areas held by Russia-backed separatists. Of even greater concern is the direct threatening of the SMM. We condemn the shots fired from an “LPR” position north-west of Luhansk at a SMM UAV. The EU reiterates that the SMM is a central asset of the OSCE in this crisis and any threats or impediments are unacceptable. The SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including to the Ukraine-Russia state border. The safety and security of the SMM monitors and its equipment must be the highest priority for all OSCE participating States and the responsibility for it lies with those in effective control of the area in which the SMM operates. We urge Russia to exercise its influence over the separatists it backs to put an end to the restrictions and intimidation. Accountability must be ensured.

The SMM continues to document on a daily basis the severe humanitarian cost of the conflict. Significant concentrations of heavy weapons remain in violation of the withdrawal lines along the Line of contact. This poses a serious risk to critical civilian infrastructure such as the Donetsk Filtration Station. Ambassador Sajdik, you and others strongly condemned the shelling of the Filtration Station, which took place on November 4, but the SMM continues to record explosions in its near vicinity. We echo your call that shelling of civilian infrastructure can have incalculable consequences for the local population and SMM monitors. The sides urgently need to ensure the protection of these sites to mitigate environmental and humanitarian risks in the conflict area.

We regret that the so-called “humanitarian convoys” from Russia continue to enter Ukrainian territory: the 69th of their kind passing through on 23 November. This occurs without the consent of the Ukrainian authorities and in clear violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and without fundamental international humanitarian principles being observed. The Minsk package foresees that humanitarian aid will be delivered through an international mechanism. An agreement on this in the humanitarian working group remains crucial.

The EU is gravely concerned about the reports of a new wave of unlawful searches in Crimea, during which Mrs Vejje Kashka, a Crimean Tatar movement veteran died, and resulting in the illegal detention of five Crimean Tatar activists in the city of Simferopol. This is a gross violation of human rights and we call once again upon

the Russian Federation to stop such persecutions and to immediately release all persons arrested and charged for expressing dissenting views, including regarding the status of Crimea, on the Crimean peninsula and in Russia.

We remain firm in our 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 in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these fundamental principles must be restored. We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility and to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. We urge Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists, and we remain deeply concerned 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.

We recall our 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 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 the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and we will not recognise it. The European Union will remain committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

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 and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.