



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Special Permanent Council N° 1204
Vienna, 26 November 2018**

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

Tensions in the Azov Sea, in the Black Sea, and in the Kerch Strait increased dangerously yesterday, after the Russian naval vessels opened fire against Ukrainian naval vessels as the latter were attempting to pass through the Kerch strait. Six Ukrainians were reportedly injured and all 23 have been detained while three Ukrainian vessels have been seized by the Russian Federation. We strongly condemn the military build-up and the aggressive actions by the Russian Federation, which are further violations of international law and norms, as well as of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. They must stop immediately. We call on the Russian Federation to release the captured vessels, their crew and equipment unconditionally and without delay. We call for restraint and de-escalation.

As clearly stated by the High Representative at the European Parliament recently, the events in the Sea of Azov are a demonstration of how instability and tensions are bound to rise when the basic rules of international cooperation are disregarded. The construction of the Kerch Bridge took place without Ukraine's consent and constitutes another violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It has led, in parallel with the militarisation of the Azov Sea, to tougher controls and long waiting times on maritime trade and naval traffic in the strait. The European Union expects Russia to stop these excessive and overlong inspections that harm regional economic relations, trade and freedom of passage at the

Kerch Strait and unhindered movement in the Azov Sea. We call on Russia to ensure freedom of navigation. A militarisation of the Azov Sea is in no one's interest, and it can only destabilise the delicate security situation in the wider Black Sea region.

The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders including its territorial waters, 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 the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and AUSTRALIA align themselves with this statement.

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