



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1283 Vienna, 1 October 2020

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

Mr. Chairperson, let me first express our sincerest condolences to Ukraine and to the families and friends of those who perished in the tragic military plane crash near Kharkiv last Friday.

The European Union welcomes that the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine is largely holding, with a significantly lower level of ceasefire violations. Although we are seeing a decrease in casualties among military personnel and the civilian population, they have not stopped altogether. We urge the sides to keep their commitments to the ceasefire and to refrain from actions that could put it at risk. In this context, we appreciate the restrained approach shown by Ukraine.

The lasting comprehensive ceasefire, despite attempts to undermine it, is an important step towards achieving a sustainable truce that would enable the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. We fully support the continued international diplomatic efforts within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group, which are aimed at reaching a political solution to the conflict in full respect for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. The progress made on the security situation on the ground needs now to be translated into tangible results in the TCG. We commend Ukraine for displaying flexibility and a constructive attitude in the ongoing negotiations and call on Russia to act likewise.

We repeat our call for further progress with regard to the disengagement areas, new entry-exit crossing points, de-mining and the exchange of detainees. On the latter, we regret that the ICRC has still not been granted access to the detainees in the non-government controlled area. We recall that this is one of the commitments of the Normandy Four Summit in December that has still to be implemented.

The ceasefire should be used to undertake further efforts in order to alleviate hardships faced by the civilian population. Demining is one aspect that demands urgent attention and the repair and maintenance of civilian infrastructure in the areas in proximity of the contact line is another critical element. In particular, it is essential to ensure that gas infrastructure is fully operational in advance of winter. In this context, we particularly commend the SMM for regularly facilitating maintenance works through its monitoring activities and we urge the sides to provide the necessary security guarantees.

The Special Monitoring Mission acts as the international community's eyes and ears in the conflict area. It should have, in accordance with its mandate, unhindered access to the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Regrettably, the SMM continues to face consistent denials of its freedom of movement, overwhelmingly in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations. We are concerned that in particular the Mission's access to the areas adjacent to the Ukraine-Russia State border outside the control of the Ukrainian government remains restricted. In this context, we would support measures to improve transparency on the Ukrainian-Russian border, including those proposed by the SMM.

We reiterate that all impediments to the SMM's work, including attempts to destroy SMM's assets, are unacceptable. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially. We urge Russia to use its considerable and undeniable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to remove all restrictions on the SMM and the use of its assets.

The EU's principled position on Ukraine was also emphasised by the High Representative Josep Borrell who visited Ukraine last week. He underlined that the

EU will continue to support Ukraine's reform process, its sovereignty and territorial integrity. A stable, prosperous and democratic Ukraine is the best way to stabilise the region.

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 UKRAINE, 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.