



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1245 Vienna, 31 October 2019

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

We are encouraged by the progress achieved in Stanytsia Luhanska. We welcome the renewed disengagement of forces in Zolote which began on 29 October. We also hope that disengagement in Zolote will lead to a reduction in ceasefire violations in the vicinity, where there is a significant civilian population. We hail the readiness expressed by the parties during the meeting of the TCG on the 29 of October to move forward with the renewed disengagement of forces and of hardware in Petrivske in the very near future. Such steps would ease the suffering of civilians living close to the contact line who bear the brunt of this conflict. In this regard, we commend the Ukrainian leadership for its unwavering commitment to peaceful conflict resolution and call on Russia to act likewise.

We express our deep concern that the security situation in the conflict areas continues to be volatile, as reported by the SMM. We once again urge the sides to respect the ceasefire and increase their efforts to build up on the positive dynamics of the negotiations conducted within the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group in order to foster further progress on the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Mr. Chairman, the European Union joins the OSCE Representative on Freedom of Media, Harlem Désir, in his condemnation of the imprisonment in Donetsk of Ukrainian journalist and blogger Stanislav Aseev who was sentenced to 15 years of jail on unfounded charges of espionage. We do not recognise the so-called

“authorities of the Donetsk People's Republic” and consider this case to be in breach of international law and elementary standards of justice. We call for Mr. Aseev’s immediate release and for the release of all illegally-detained prisoners in the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine. We also call for the release of blogger and contributor to the Ukrainian Service RFE/RL, Oleh Halaziuk, who has also been detained by the armed formations in the non-government- controlled area of the Donetsk region since August 2017.

We deplore that civilians, including children, continue to be injured by hand grenades and land mines that occur mostly in areas held by Russia backed armed formations, and reiterate our call to disengage, withdraw heavy weapons and step up efforts for comprehensive mine action, which are all prerequisites for a permanent and sustainable ceasefire. We reaffirm our position that full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

On 27 October, the SMM yet again recorded small arms fire targeting an SMM mini UAV near non-government controlled Petrivske. The EU strongly deplores any attempts to harass, intimidate or impede the work of the SMM and recall that the SMM must have safe, secure, unconditional, and unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine. This includes the Crimean Peninsula and along the Ukraine-Russia state border, to which the SMM is systematically denied access by Russia backed armed formations. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

In October, so called “humanitarian convoys” were again 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. The Minsk agreements foresee that humanitarian aid will be delivered through an international mechanism. An agreement on this in the humanitarian working group remains crucial.

We reiterate our utmost concern about the Russian presidential decrees and their extensions, enabling the simplified granting of Russian passports to Ukrainian

citizens, which constitutes yet another attack on the sovereignty of Ukraine and runs counter to the spirit and objectives of the Minsk agreements. We will not recognise these passports and we call on other OSCE Participating States to do likewise.

We reiterate our position on the unjustified use of force by Russia near the Kerch Strait on 25 November 2018, its negative impact in the Black and Azov seas and Russia's violations of international law. We call on Russia to return to Ukraine's custody the three vessels seized in the Black Sea on 25 November last year, in accordance with the binding order of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. We further call on Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage to and from the Sea of Azov, in accordance with international law. Respect for international court rulings is fundamental for an international rules-based order.

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 UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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