



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1273 Vienna, 2 July 2020

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

Mr Chairperson, let us be perfectly clear: the restrictions on the freedom of movement of the Special Monitoring Mission are serious violations of its mandate and are absolutely unacceptable. The Covid-19 pandemic must not be used as a pretext to hinder the SMM’s access to the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine, especially since the Mission has taken stringent measures in order to ensure the health and security of themselves and the local population. The restrictions of its freedom of movement hamper the functioning of the mission to the degree that sustaining SMM operations in the non-government controlled areas might become impossible in a few weeks. In this context, we urge the Russian Federation to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to make sure that no undue restrictions are placed on the SMM.

In the same vein, we are deeply concerned about the fact that the safety and security of the SMM is being jeopardised by frequent serious security incidents in the close vicinity of monitoring patrols and deliberate destruction of SMM assets. This impedes the Mission’s ability to conduct monitoring, for instance in Petrivske disengagement area where a new and expensive camera was recently deliberately destroyed. Last week, another camera near Shyrokyne was destroyed. In addition, on 30 June, there was a destruction of two cameras in the Oktiabr mine near non-government controlled Vesele and the SMM assessed that the cameras were again destroyed by weapons

used in the immediate vicinity of the camera sites. The EU calls once again on Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to ensure the safety and security of the SMM and its assets in the whole territory of Ukraine. Those responsible for impeding the work of the SMM and for destroying its assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially. We look forward for the thorough investigations of these incidents and investigation results reported to the Permanent Council.

Mr. Chairperson, on 27 June, we marked 6<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the signature of EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. We continue supporting Ukraine in implementing wide range of reforms for the benefit of Ukrainian people. Still, we are concerned how the restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic are further increasing the division between the populations living on both sides of the contact line. Before the pandemic, there were about one million civilian crossings a month. Now, although the Olenivka-Novotroitske and Stanytsia Luhanska entry and exit checkpoints have re-opened, the cumbersome procedures recently introduced by Russia backed armed formations mean that there are only some hundreds of crossings each week. Moreover, the EECP near Olenivka was again closed on 28 June. Further division between the people, will hamper the reconciliation and reintegration process when the control of the whole territory of Ukraine is returned to the Ukrainian government, in line with the Minsk Agreements. We therefore join Ambassador Grau, SMM Chief Monitor Ambassador Cevik, and others in the call for a coordinated action to re-open all of the entry and exit crossing points and to refrain from imposing further restrictions on the people crossing the contact line.

Mr Chairperson, the Minsk agreements remain the only framework for the peaceful settlement of this conflict that fully respects sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. The Minsk agreements were also signed by the Russian Federation. Russia has therefore accepted its responsibility for a sustainable political settlement of the conflict and the implementation of the provisions of these agreements. In addition, the Normandy format leaders declared in February 2015 that they would use their influence on the parties concerned. The Minsk Protocol states that the Trilateral Contact Group is made up of representatives from Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE. The latter is the organization that chairs it. On this basis, the EU calls on Russia to fully assume its responsibility, to act

constructively within the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy format and to implement the Minsk agreements in full. We commend Ukraine for having the political will to negotiate an end to this conflict. We note that the recent meetings of the TCG and its Working Groups seems to have been marked by constructive discussions and hope to see tangible progress soon.

Mr Chairman, more than six years ago the Russian Federation illegally annexed the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol and began acts of aggression in eastern Ukraine in blatant violation of international law and core OSCE principles and commitments. The EU condemn these acts. Given that full implementation of the Minsk agreement has not yet been achieved, the EU took the decision on 29 June to roll-over the economic sanctions targeting specific economic sectors of the Russian Federation for a further six months. The EU also remains committed to its non-recognition policy of the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation. In this context, on 18 June we prolonged our restrictive measures related to Russia's illegal annexation for one more year. Crimea is Ukraine.

The EU deplores the Russian military parades held on 24 June on the territory of Ukraine, both in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula and the military-style parades in the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk, including with weapons in violation of withdrawal lines. The EU is also gravely concerned with the involvement of residents of Ukraine in the Russian constitutional referendum.

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.

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 and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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