



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1279 Vienna, 3 September 2020**

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

The European Union welcomes the tangible commitment by the sides to the additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire which were agreed in the Trilateral Contact Group. Since the introduction of these additional measures on 27 July, the number of ceasefire violations has dropped significantly and the security situation has improved. The SMM did not report a single incident of civilian casualties or damages to civilian properties due to shelling or small-arms fire during the first four weeks since the introduction of the additional measures. We congratulate Ambassador Grau and the negotiating teams in the TCG and the Normandy Format for this successful result and hope that this improvement of the situation on the ground will lead to other positive developments for the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

This commitment to the comprehensive and unlimited ceasefire represents an important step forward as a lasting security situation is vital for the sustainable political settlement of the conflict. Nevertheless, we underline the urgent need for a functioning coordination mechanism for responding to ceasefire violations and urge the sides to come to an agreement in due time. The EU stands firm in its support for the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy Format in their work to enable the full implementation of the Minsk agreements and to restore Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We commend Ukraine for its constructive approach and political will to negotiate an end to this conflict and call on Russia to live up to its responsibility as a signatory of the Minsk agreements by implementing their provisions

and by acting constructively within the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy Format.

Despite the easing of the situation, we recall that there have nonetheless been tragic incidents: a seven-year old boy was injured after a grenade detonated in Kypuche, Luhansk region on 26 August and a man died when a grenade exploded inside his home in Mariupol on 27 August. We therefore encourage the sides to double their efforts to further stabilise the security environment, which according to the conclusions of the Normandy Summit in Paris includes agreeing and implementing new disengagement areas, further exchange of conflict-related detainees. We welcome the preliminary agreement on an updated demining plan and hope it will be implemented swiftly.

The EU welcomes the fact that SMM personnel have been able to cross the contact line and return to the non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions to resume monitoring activities. Nevertheless, we note with concern that challenges still remain concerning the movement of the SMM, threatening its effective functioning, and that there is still signal interference to SMM's UAVs on both sides of the contact line. We underline the importance of SMM's full access to the whole territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, , which is illegally annexed by Russia. We are also worried about the fact that there are numerous reports of people near and inside former military and military-type positions during evening and night hours in the Stanytsia Luhanska, Zolote and Petrivske disengagement areas and that the SMM has still no access to the latter. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to remove all remaining restrictions on the SMM and its assets, and to respect the agreements concerning the disengagement areas.

We are deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation at the closed entry-exit-checkpoints to the non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk. The SMM has registered hundreds of cases of civilians being prevented from travelling to government-controlled areas or from returning to their homes in non-government controlled areas. At the same time, the crossing points to non-government controlled Luhansk and to the Russian Federation remain open. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to remove these obstacles and ease the burden for the local population.

Furthermore, the EU noted with concern the reports from the OSCE Observer Mission in Gukovo and Donetsk regarding crossings of Russian convoys into Ukraine on 30 July and 27 August. This is a violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as of fundamental international humanitarian principles. We have not seen any evidence that the so-called humanitarian aid, which Russia claims to deliver with these convoys, has had any sizeable impact on the population concerned.

We are also concerned by the reports about recent illegal searches and detentions in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol which is illegally annexed by Russia, particularly in the case of Crimean Tatars. The EU calls for full compliance with international human rights standards in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. We continue to urge the Russian Federation to ensure unimpeded access to international human rights monitoring missions and human rights non-governmental organisations to Crimea.

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 and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.