



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1266 Vienna, 7 May 2020

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

Mr Chairman, the European Union welcomes the videoconference of Normandy Four Foreign Ministers that took place on 30 April. This was the first high-level meeting of the Normandy format since the summit held in Paris on 9 December 2019. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the urgent measures made necessary by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in eastern Ukraine and to take stock of the implementation of the agreed conclusions of the Paris Summit. Still, we regret the situation on the ground with a 40% increase in ceasefire violations in one week and shelling of residential areas leading to further casualties. SMM has reported ceasefire violations also within and around disengagement areas. We call for a comprehensive ceasefire, which is one of the key elements of these commitments, and is in unison with the call for a global ceasefire by the UN Secretary General Guterres.

We fully support efforts of the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy Format in working towards a sustainable political solution of the conflict, in full respect of the sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. It is therefore important that the sides take the necessary steps to implement the agreed conclusions of the Paris N4 Summit of December in good faith. In this context, the EU commends the constructive approach displayed by Ukraine and calls on Russia to act likewise, including within the TCG.

Mr Chairman, it was outlined in the OSCE Permanent Council’s Decision No. 1117, that the SMM should have an unhindered, unrestricted and unconditional freedom of movement in the whole territory of Ukraine. We note that the SMM has taken stringent

external and internal precautionary measures in response to the pandemic, to ensure the continued safety of all, including of the local population. Therefore, it is gravely concerning that the armed formations repeatedly deny SMM access to non-government controlled areas, as were outlined by numerous SMM Spot Reports in recent weeks. Any attempts to restrict the freedom of the movement of SMM run against both the Minsk Agreements as well as the above-mentioned PC decision. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to meet the Minsk commitments in full and to stop this hindrance of the SMM to fulfil its mandate.

The European Union does not recognise the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol by Russia, which is a clear violation of international law. Therefore, we strongly condemn the recently announced conscription of residents of the peninsula to the Russian Federation Armed Forces. This is a violation of international humanitarian law, by which also Russia is bound. We also recall that one year has now passed since the Russian presidential decree of April 2019 granting citizenship to inhabitants of the non-government controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in a simplified procedure. This is another attack on the sovereignty of Ukraine and runs counter to the spirit of the Minsk agreements. The European Union issued a guidance on territorial competence and non-recognition of such passports and calls on other participating States not to recognize them either.

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