



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1256 Vienna, 23 January 2020

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

Mr. Chairman, the European Union welcomes that the first visit abroad of the OSCE Chairman in Office Prime Minister Rama took him to Ukraine, including Stanytsia Luhanska, an area directly affected by the ongoing conflict. The EU fully supports the commitment of the Albanian Chairmanship to promote the peaceful resolution of the conflict in eastern Ukraine and to keep this topic at the top of the OSCE's agenda.

We also see this visit as an important contribution to the continued international diplomatic efforts within the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group to put an end to the ongoing conflict. We urge the sides to implement the commitments of the Minsk Agreements, including those undertaken at the Normandy Four Summit on 9 December, in good faith. In this context, we commend the Ukrainian leadership for their constructive approach and the political will to negotiate an end to the conflict and call on Russia to do likewise.

One of the most urgent tasks remains the implementation of a full, unlimited and comprehensive ceasefire. We call on the sides to increase their efforts to this end, in line with their commitments undertaken at the N4 Summit in Paris. We are deeply concerned that the security situation has become more volatile again as the ceasefire violations have doubled during the last week, including four times more explosions and use of weapons that should have been withdrawn according to the Minsk agreements. This led, regrettably, to more civilian casualties and a sharp increase in casualties amongst Ukrainian servicemen, in particular as a result of artillery shelling. The

deliberate shelling, including in and around the disengagement areas, must be stopped immediately. We urge Russia to ensure the respect for the disengagement agreements by the armed formations, in particular inside the Petrivske area where the armed formations are still present, fortification works are ongoing and the SMM's access is repeatedly restricted.

Yesterday the Forum for Security Cooperation discussed mine action, including contributions from the SMM. This subject deserves full attention in the OSCE, especially in the context of the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine. As mines and unexploded ordnance remain the main cause of casualties among civilians – with five cases reported only in last week – and a serious impediment to the SMM, we reiterate the urgency of the work that remains to be done in the de-mining process, including the development and implementation of an updated de-mining plan and new priority areas. We strongly condemn the use of anti-personnel mines, as recently recorded by the SMM in a non-government-controlled area north of Luhansk, as mentioned in the daily report of 16 January.

Mr. Chairman, the SMM remains our most reliable source of information of the situation on the ground. We highly value its regular and thematic reports. The safety and security of the SMM is of primary importance. The EU strongly deplores any attempts to harass, intimidate or impede the work of SMM personnel and condemns the continued threats and restrictions to the SMM, which occur predominantly in non-government controlled areas. This practice hampers the SMM from fulfilling its mandate. The SMM must have safe, secure, unconditional and unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine in order to fully implement its mandate. This access includes the illegally annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and the area along the Ukraine-Russia state border, to which the SMM is systematically denied access by Russia-backed formations. We strongly condemn actions which jeopardise the security of SMM monitors, such as the firing of an anti-aircraft gun near an SMM patrol east of non-government controlled Zolote-5. We once

again deplore the targeting of SMM assets, including SMM UAVs, by means of signal interference and small arms fire occurring almost on a daily basis in non-government controlled areas. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

The EU is concerned about recent impediments set up by Russia-backed armed formations against cars with Ukrainian license plates. This discrimination is illegitimate and unacceptable.

We reiterate our utmost concern about the Russian presidential decrees and their extensions, enabling the simplified granting of Russian citizenship 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 do not recognise these passports issued on the basis of these decrees and we call on other OSCE participating States to do likewise.

We continue to call on Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage to and from the Sea of Azov in accordance with international law.

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

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