



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1321 Vienna, 24 June 2021

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

Following a welcome decrease in ceasefire violations for three consecutive weeks, we regret that the SMM recorded 1,951 ceasefire violations last week, which is a 265% increase. Only on 17 June, a spike of 994 ceasefire violations was recorded. The numbers of violations demonstrates that the overall security situation in the conflict zone remains volatile. Furthermore, since the beginning of 2021, the SMM has confirmed 37 civilian casualties, out of which 73% were due to mines, unexploded ordnance and other explosive objects and there is also an unfortunate increase in casualties among the Ukrainian military personnel. We repeat that the ceasefire can best be preserved if both sides implement the commitments they made in the TCG and adhere to the additional measures agreed in July 2020. We deplore any military provocations and commend Ukraine for its restraint. It is also unacceptable that 18 months after the last Normandy Summit in Paris, the final agreement on the 19-demining zones is still blocked within the TCG, despite Ukraine’s readiness to start immediate implementation.

We have recently received the last informal briefings from Ambassadors Pierre Morel and Toni Frisch, who have been the coordinators for the political and the humanitarian working groups of the TCG. We pay tribute to their excellent and dedicated work and wish all the best to their successors.

In the briefing by Ambassador Frisch, the closed entry and exit checkpoints were highlighted as a major issue for the civilian population. We regret that despite the fact

that agreements to open the Zolote and Shchastia checkpoints were reached over a year ago, they are still closed on the non-government controlled side. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to ensure the opening of these two EECPs, as well as the reopening of all other currently closed EECPs. We urge both sides to work towards an improvement of the humanitarian situation as well as to restore people-to-people contacts and economic links. We welcome the steps taken by Ukraine to open these EECPs and to provide services at these checkpoints for the residents of the non-government controlled areas.

We reject the Russian narrative of portraying itself as a mediator of an “internal Ukrainian conflict”, thus obstructing meaningful discussions in the TCG as well as in the Normandy format. The Minsk Protocol signed by the Russian Federation is unambiguous in stating that the TCG consists of representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE. Russia has therefore clearly accepted its binding responsibility in the peaceful settlement of the conflict and the implementation of the Minsk agreements. In this respect, Russia’s attempts to legitimize the so-called “people’s republics” in eastern Ukraine are not constructive. The Package of Measures only provides for consultations with so-called “representatives of the certain areas in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions” with regard constitutional amendments and the special order of local self-government (special status) as well as the law on local elections. We urge Russia, as a party to the conflict, to engage constructively in the TCG discussions and to implement the Minsk Agreements in full.

We continue to condemn Russia’s illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, over seven years ago. We regret that the human rights situation continues to deteriorate with an increasing number of human rights abuses, including torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary arrest and the refusal of medical care to persons apprehended and detained in Crimea. Many are subsequently illegally deported to the Russian Federation. We are also deeply concerned that freedom of expression and media freedom, as well as freedom of peaceful assembly, are severely restricted. Journalists, media workers, human rights defenders and activists are especially targeted by the de facto authorities. In addition, the Crimean Tatars are unacceptably persecuted and have their human rights gravely violated, including through the shutting down of Crimean Tatar media outlets, and the banning of the activities of the Mejlis, their self-governing body, as well as the persecution of its

leaders and members of their community. We urge Russia to abide by international law and its OSCE commitments on human rights and fundamental freedoms and to release all those who have been detained and sentenced in breach of 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 the 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 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 and LIECHTENSTEIN, 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.