



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1300 Vienna, 28 January 2021

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

Madam Chair, we condemn Russia’s illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol in 2014 and the continuing violations of international law, including international human rights law, in the peninsula. The judgement by the European Court of Human Rights issued on 14 January in the case “Ukraine against Russia concerning a pattern of human rights violations in Crimea” is a landmark decision in holding Russia accountable for its illegal actions in Crimea.

We also condemn all attempts to impose Russian laws and regulations upon the population in Crimea as well as in the non-government controlled areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine. Actions such as the simplified and selective procedure to obtain Russian citizenship, forced passportization, and widespread drafting into the Russian Armed Forces in Crimea are violations of international law and fundamental OSCE principles. The population living in Crimea and in the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine must not be deprived of their civil and property rights. We urge Russia to ensure their rights and fundamental freedoms and to implement the Minsk agreements in good faith. We also call on Russia to ensure international human rights actors full, free and unrestricted access to the whole territory of Ukraine, including Crimea.

Madam Chair, the Special Monitoring Mission acts as the international community’s eyes and ears in the conflict area. According to its mandate, it should have unhindered access to the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. All signatories of the Minsk agreements, including Russia, have agreed on the need to ensure the SMM safe and secure access and that any

restriction of their freedom of movement deserves a rapid response. Nevertheless, the SMM is prevented from accessing Crimea and is facing consistent impediments to its freedom of movement, overwhelmingly in areas held by the Russia-backed armed formations and especially in the areas adjacent to the Ukraine-Russia State border. We urge the Russian Federation to ensure the SMM access to Crimea and to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to make sure that all undue restrictions on the SMM are removed.

There are also frequent deliberate targeting and destruction of SMM assets, such as the UAVs. We call on the sides to contribute to halting these unacceptable impediments. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets, should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

We reiterate our strong support to the Chairpersonship for its work towards a sustainable resolution of the conflict. We also strongly support the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group in facilitating the implementation of the Minsk agreements. However, we regret that the negotiations continue to encounter the same stumbling blocks. We commend the political will and constructive approach shown by Ukraine on the settlement of this conflict and urge Russia, as a party to the above mentioned formats, to reciprocate by implementing the provisions it has committed itself to.

We urge the sides to do their utmost to agree on the security conditions necessary for carrying out repair and reconstruction works regarding infrastructure, for example the gas distribution station near Marinka which, along with the gas pipeline, was damaged in June 2014. Fourteen thousand residents of Krasnohorivka and Marinka depend on this station for heat supply.

The dire humanitarian situation in the conflict area must be alleviated. In this context, we welcome the steps taken by Ukraine to open the Shchastia and Zolote EECPs and urge Russia to use its influence in order to ensure a synchronized and transparent opening of these two EECPs in the line with the commitments made at the Normandy Summit in Paris and in the TCG, as well as the reopening of all currently closed EECPs.

We welcome the fact that the ceasefire continues to largely hold. Still, we regret the worsening trend in incidents at the contact line. We have received several

disturbing reports about recent military casualties. For example on 21 January, a Ukrainian serviceman was killed as a result of shelling.

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 fueling 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, 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.