



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1163
Vienna, 9 November 2017**

**EU statement on “Russia’s Ongoing Aggression Against
Ukraine and Illegal Annexation of Crimea”**

Chairperson, we are acutely aware of the fact, that it is the civilian population, who continue to bear the direct and severe consequences of the ongoing conflict in and around Ukraine. With this in mind, we join Ambassador Martin Sajdik, in strongly condemning the shelling of the Donetsk Water Filtration Station on the night between November 3 and 4. Any damage to this facility risks disrupting the supply of water to almost 350,000 people on both sides of the line of contact. In addition, shelling of civilian infrastructure can trigger major environmental damage with incalculable consequences, in a region already heavily impaired by more than three years of armed conflict. If key environmental issues are not addressed, it could lead to severe casualties and long-term damage to the region, a high financial burden, and further impact on the already suffering local population. We fully support Ambassador Sajdik’s calls for the sides to establish technical safety zones. We urge the sides to work with the SMM and the JCCC to create such safety zones around civilian infrastructure, and to agree without delay, the creation of such zones.

The shelling of the Donetsk Water Filtration Station unfortunately reflects the overall negative trend of a substantial increase in ceasefire violations that we have been seeing over the last couple of weeks. The security situation has gravely deteriorated; the SMM has recorded civilian casualties and observed shelling damage in residential areas. We strongly condemn any violations of the ceasefire and call on the sides to adhere to the recent re-commitment to the ceasefire.

We note with concern the marked deterioration of the crossing point at Stanytsia-Luhanska and increasingly perilous conditions for those accessing the bridge. If vital repairs are not made soon the bridge is at serious risk of collapse, impacting on the 8,000 people who cross every day as well as SMM monitors who require full access to both sides of the bridge. The situation is made all the worse by the continuing ceasefire violations in and around the Stanytsia Luhanska disengagement zone. We urgently call on all sides to reach an agreement, ensure the necessary security guarantees and make these critical repairs. The opening of further entry-exit check points would help to relieve some of the pressure on the civilian population and we call on the sides to continue work to open the crossing point at Zolote.

We are concerned about the lack of appropriate follow-up after the incident on 25 October where an SMM patrol was threatened deliberately and repeatedly in an area held by Russia backed separatists. The SMM has asked the JCCC to investigate the incident. However, their response was negligible and clearly fell short of its responsibility to contribute to rapid response to impediments to SMM monitoring and to the SMM's safety and security.

One area where the SMM have repeatedly been denied access in the past is the city of Novoazovsk, near the Ukraine-Russia state border. We note that recently the SMM has been able to gain access and on 31st October saw an armed man in "dark green digital camouflage clothing, with a shoulder patch bearing the image of a black bat on a blue background surrounded by a yellow ring", similar to the description of the insignia of the Russian special forces. We thus reiterate that the SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including to the Ukraine-Russia state border, as well as nearby settlements, in order to provide the international community with a complete picture of the situation on the ground.

We remain firm in our 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 in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility and to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. We again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military

support to the separatists, and we remain deeply concerned about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in separatist-held areas. 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 recognise these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilise the situation and reverse moves that contravene these principles. Respect for these principles must be restored. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and we will not recognise it. The European Union will remain committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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