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EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1323
Vienna, 8 July 2021

EU Statement in response to the Update by the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson in Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Heidi Grau, and to the Report by the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik

The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Heidi Grau and Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik to the Permanent Council. As this is Ambassador Grau's last PC, we would like to thank her for her outstanding work in trying to advance the discussions within the Trilateral Contact Group. Dear Ambassador, you have been a true asset to the OSCE and we wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Madam Chair, the conflict in eastern Ukraine, which is caused by the continuous acts of aggression by the Russian Federation must remain at the top of the OSCE agenda. We therefore much regret that we were not able to hold the Annual Security Review Conference last week, including the special session on this conflict.

Ambassador Çevik, the European Union thanks you for your report. It is highly concerning that the security situation is increasingly fragile, despite the continuing ceasefire, with numerous spikes of ceasefire violations along the contact line and increased use of Minsk-proscribed weapons as well as civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure. We note with concern that there has been an upward trend in ceasefire violations since December 2020, that the numbers have increased almost threefold since your last reporting period and that you have recorded 670 Minsk-proscribed weapons in violation of their respective withdrawal lines, 87% of which

were in the non-government controlled areas. We also note from your recent daily and weekly reports that the figures are not improving. In the week 21-27 June, the SMM recorded 2 775 violations. On the night of 23-24 June, there was a spike of 1302 ceasefire violations near the Zolote disengagement area. In addition, on 22 June, there were ceasefire violations while a bus carrying workers was driving from the Donetsk Filtration Station. In these circumstances, your work as the coordinator for the TCG Security Working Group is very important and we hope to hear about positive outcomes of your discussions soon.

It is regrettable that the SMM is still faces impediments when attempting to facilitate dialogue between the sides, to verify ceasefire violations and to conduct its monitoring of the entire territory of Ukraine in a safe and secure manner, in accordance with its mandate. We regret that what you describe as "chronic restrictions" have forced the Mission to operate as three separate entities and that the Mission is unable to access areas near the Ukraine-Russia state border. Furthermore, the demands by the Russia-backed armed formations to inspect the SMM trailers crossing the contact line run counter to the SMM's mandate, which guarantees free access to the entire territory of Ukraine. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to make sure that all restrictions on the SMM's freedom of movement are removed.

We also regret that the unprecedented jamming of the SMM UAVs significantly hinders the Mission's ability to conduct effective monitoring and reporting of the security situation. The incident on 29 June is one of several worrying examples when jamming at the landing site in Stepanivka resulted in a crash and a destruction of the long-range UAV airframe. Then on 2 July, the SMM discovered that the camera system at the Oktiabr mine close to non-government controlled Donetsk city had been damaged by gunfire. We reiterate that all those responsible for the deliberate loss or destruction of SMM assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

Dear Ambassadors, we commend your tireless efforts within the Trilateral Contact Group. However, we regret that lack of political will continues to prevent any meaningful and result-oriented discussions. We continue to reject the Russian narrative of portraying itself as a mediator of an "internal Ukrainian conflict", thus obstructing substantive discussions in the TCG as well as in the Normandy format. The Minsk Agreements are unambiguous in stating that the TCG consists of representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE, with the latter as

the mediator. In this respect, Russia's attempts to legitimize the so-called "people's republics" in eastern Ukraine are not constructive. We therefore urge Russia, as a party to the conflict, to take responsibility for its actions and to engage in the discussions on the full implementation of the Minsk agreements in good faith.

We are concerned over the worrying developments concerning the exchange of security guarantees, as they are critical for repairs and maintenance of civilian infrastructure. It is also disappointing that, despite the readiness repeatedly shown by Ukraine, there is still no agreement on the implementation of the new disengagement areas, the 19 new demining zones or on the full operation of the Zolote and Shchastia crossing points also on the side of the Russia-backed armed formations. We urge Russia to assume its responsibility as a participant in the TCG and the Normandy format as well as a signatory of the Minsk agreements and implement the provisions to which it has committed itself.

We would also like to express our gratitude for the SMM's continued reporting on the humanitarian situation as it is an important part of the OSCE's comprehensive approach. In your report, we value the information you provide about the hardships civilians are facing when trying to cross the contact line. We also appreciate your focus on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and how you have been interviewing women living near the contact line about their perceptions on security in eastern Ukraine.

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.