



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1304 Vienna, 4 March 2021

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

Madam Chair, while reiterating its positive view on the fact that the July ceasefire is still largely holding, the EU regrets the fact that the security situation along the contact line continues to deteriorate. There are increasing numbers of targeted shelling and increased involvement of snipers, resulting in new casualties among Ukrainian military personnel. There are also worrying reports about reoccurring spikes of ceasefire violations around the Donetsk Filtration Station and other infrastructure objects. We call on both sides to do their utmost in order to keep the ceasefire intact and once again urge the Russian Federation to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to make sure that the ceasefire is fully respected.

The SMM is not only the eyes and ears of the international community. The mission also plays an invaluable role for the local population, in particular by its monitoring of localized ceasefires, which enables maintenance and operation of critical civilian infrastructure. We are therefore particularly concerned when the safety and security of the SMM monitors and its assets are jeopardised, as happened on 16 February when an explosive detonated in the vicinity of an SMM patrol and on 1 March when the SMM lost spatial control of one of its mini-UAVs near Yasynuvata (NGCA), due to signal interference. The EU deplures any attempts to harass, intimidate or impede the work of SMM personnel, which occur predominantly in non-government-controlled areas, which, as stated in the latest SMM reports, also happened on 18 February near Vosnesenivka (NGCA), where an SMM mini-UAV was forcefully

landed under the threat of its confiscation, and on 23 February in Novoazovsk (NGCA), when the SMM monitor was told by a member of the Russia-backed armed formations that his presence may potentially “create problems for himself”. We are also concerned about the continued restrictions on the freedom of movement of the SMM, as occurred on 1 March when an SMM patrol was hindered by the Russia-backed armed formations from passing through a checkpoint near Olenivka for almost five hours. The SMM must have safe, secure, unconditional and unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including the Crimean peninsula and the areas along the Ukraine-Russia state border.

The EU also noted with concern that on 15 February, the SMM spotted for the first time a target and acquisition radar (51U6 Kasta-2E1) near non-government-controlled Buhaiivka. This is a highly sophisticated weapon used by the Russian Federation, which raises questions how it entered Ukraine and why it is in the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine.

The EU continues to call on the sides to implement the Minsk agreements, which consist of the Minsk Protocol of 5 September 2014, the Minsk Memorandum of 19 September 2014 and the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015. We underline Russia's responsibility, as a signatory to these agreements, to implement the provisions that it has committed itself to.

We regret that the lack of political will has created a deadlock in the work of the Trilateral Contact Group, which consists of Ukraine and Russia with the OSCE as mediator. We call on Russia to act constructively within the TCG discussions. In addition, several commitments made at the Normandy Summit in 2019 are still outstanding and need swift implementation. In this context, we commend Ukraine for the steps taken to open the Shchastia and Zolote entry-exit checkpoints and its willingness to move ahead with the adoption of the updated de-mining plan of 19 areas, as agreed in the TCG, as well as the disengagement of four new areas.

We also call on Russia to put a stop to its policy of issuing Russian passports in a simplified and selective manner in large numbers to Ukrainian citizens. This practice directly contradicts the spirit and the objectives of the Minsk agreements and constitutes a clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty.

The EU's principled position on the resolution of this conflict and the importance the EU attaches to its relations with Ukraine was also emphasised by the President of the European Council Charles Michel during his visit to Ukraine on 2-3 March. We will continue to support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders.

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.

