



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1319 Vienna, 10 June 2021

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

Madam Chair, the Border Observation Mission in Gukovo and Donetsk is an important confidence building measure as it provides information about the civilian and military movements at these two checkpoints on the Russia-Ukraine state border currently not under control of the Ukrainian government. Moreover, border monitoring is an essential element of a political resolution to the conflict as the Minsk Agreements outline a clear role for the OSCE in monitoring and verification on both sides of this border. The importance of these issues was reaffirmed during the Tirana Ministerial Council, when 35 participating States co-sponsored a draft decision on this topic, which unfortunately failed to be adopted due to the position of the Russian Federation. In this context, the EU regrets that, also due to the position of Russia, the mandate of the Border Observation Mission could recently be extended by only two months. In this context, we recall our support for the Mission, and reiterate our appreciation for its work. We also underline that there is a strong need for the Mission to continue implementing its mandate and for a timely adoption of the next extension. We strongly encourage Russia to revise its position in order to allow for a resumption of longer mandates beyond 31 July.

In this context, the ongoing restrictions on freedom of movement of the SMM, which are mainly occurring in the non-government controlled areas and in areas close to the Ukraine-Russia state border, remain a cause of serious concern. We therefore urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to ensure the safe and secure access of the SMM to the whole territory of Ukraine,

including Crimea. Moreover, since the end of March, the SMM is reporting almost constant GPS signal interference, including on take-off and landing in areas near the base in Stepanivka. We reiterate that those responsible for these actions and resulting loss of UAVs should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

We also note with concern that the SMM continues to report modern Russian equipment in the conflict zone, as was the case on 29 May when the Russian electronic warfare system “RB-636V Svet-KU” in Novoazovsk was observed. This information raises questions on how such sophisticated weapons were transported into Ukraine.

We regret that the security situation in the conflict zone remains volatile, although there has recently been a decrease in ceasefire violations. It is also regrettable 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. Furthermore, it is unacceptable that 18 months after the last Normandy Summit in Paris, final agreement on the 19-demining zones is still blocked within the TCG, despite Ukraine’s readiness to start immediate implementation.

Madam Chair, the Minsk Agreements are unambiguous in stating that the TCG consists of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE. We therefore deplore and decisively reject the distorted narrative that Russia advances, presenting itself as a mediator of an “internal Ukrainian conflict” and attempting to legitimize the so-called “people’s republics” in eastern Ukraine. Russia is merely trying to divert attention from its continuous acts of aggression and its unceasing undermining of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, including by its illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula, which contradicts its obligations under international law. These actions are undoubtedly a severe threat to the European Security Order, and for that, Russia is solely responsible.

We also condemn all attempts to impose Russian laws and regulations upon the population in the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine and in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. We deplore the issuing of Russian passports on a massive scale to Ukrainian citizens in a simplified and selective manner. It is also concerning that high schools in the non-government controlled areas are organising their final exams according to Russian, and not Ukrainian, education standards. These measures violate the sovereignty of Ukraine, impede a future reintegration process and contradict the objectives of the Minsk Agreements.

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, 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.