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EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1328
Vienna, 5 August 2021

EU Statement on "Russia's Ongoing Aggression against Ukraine and Illegal Occupation of Crimea"

FINAL (747 words)

1. Madame Chair, we had positively noted that the agreement on additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire from July 2020 had resulted in a drop by approximately 80 per cent of all ceasefire violations and 35 per cent of corroborated civilian casualties compared to the previous year. Despite this, violations of the ceasefire continue to occur on a daily basis. These breaches of the ceasefire continue to have a heavy impact on the civilians living in the conflict-affected area and on Ukraine's military personnel. We again repeat our call on the sides to adhere to the ceasefire and commend Ukraine for its restraint in responding to provocations.

2. We are deeply worried by the continuous unprecedented restrictions that the SMM is facing on its freedom of movement almost on a daily basis, as they affect the Mission's ability to fulfil its mandate. Equally worrisome is the consistent interference with the SMM's technical assets, which has led to the loss of an increasing number of UAVs and to the temporary suspension of long-range UAV flights, after a long-range UAV crashed near Stepanivka on 29 June. Another deplorable incident occurred last Saturday when denials and threats by a member of the Russia-backed armed formations to shoot down an SMM mini-UAV delayed its pre-announced launch from non-government controlled Staromykhailivka. 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 so that the SMM and its assets can have safe and secure access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea.

3. We deplore the issuing of Russian passports on a massive scale to Ukrainian citizens in a simplified and selective manner. We are also deeply concerned about the resolution adopted by Russia's Central Election Commission on 20 July stating that residents of the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk who have obtained a Russian passport can register and cast their vote online in the September 19 elections. Such measures violate the sovereignty of Ukraine, contradict the objectives of the Minsk agreements and impede the future reintegration process.

4. Madam Chair, the European Union would like to reiterate, once again, that the Minsk Protocol signed by the Russian Federation is unambiguous in stating that the TCG consists of representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE. Russia has therefore clearly accepted its binding responsibility in the peaceful settlement of the conflict and the implementation of the Minsk agreements. In this respect, Russia's attempts to legitimize the so-called "people's republics" in eastern Ukraine are not constructive. We decisively reject the Russian narrative of portraying itself as a mediator of an "internal Ukrainian conflict" and we call on Russia, as a party to the conflict, to engage constructively in the TCG discussions and to implement the Minsk agreements in full.

5. 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.

6. 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.