



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1336 Vienna, 23 September 2021

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

FINAL (860 words)

1. Madam Chair, the European Union deeply regrets Russia’s decision not to agree to an extension of the Border Observation Mission to Gukovo and Donetsk beyond 30 September. OSCE monitoring of the segments of the state border between Ukraine and Russia, currently not under the control of the Ukrainian government, is an important provision of the Minsk agreements. The fact that Russia, as a party to the conflict, as the host country of this Mission and as a signatory of the Minsk agreements, has decided to end the Border Observation Mission is a step backwards in finding a peaceful resolution to this conflict.
2. We remain deeply concerned about the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in the sovereign territory of Ukraine. The frequent SMM reports about the presence of Russian military equipment in eastern Ukraine underline the need for greater transparency about what is happening at the Ukraine-Russia State border currently not controlled by the Ukrainian government. Following the closing down of the BOM, further actions are needed from Russia in order to prove its commitment under the Minsk agreements with regard to OSCE border monitoring. We reiterate our call that SMM should have unrestricted access to all border areas, in accordance with its mandate, and urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to lift the restrictions of the SMM’s freedom of movement. In order to create more transparency, we would also support SMM in opening forward patrol bases close to the border, as well as a much wider use of long range UAVs in their work.

3. Madam Chair, we regret that the security situation in the conflict zone is becoming increasingly volatile. SMM reported an average of 273 ceasefire violations per day during the first two weeks of September 2021, a 30% increase compared to August. This deteriorating trend is alarming, in particular as it is accompanied by an increased use of Minsk-proscribed heavy weapons, fighting in and around the disengagement areas and continuing obstruction of SMM UAVs. As a consequence, the human toll of the conflict both among the civilian population and military personnel keeps rising. We recall that ensuring a stable security situation on the ground is critical for the settlement of this conflict.
4. The Minsk agreements are unambiguous in stating that the TCG consists of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and OSCE, with the latter as the mediator. We therefore deplore and decisively reject the Russian narrative, presenting itself as a mediator of a so-called “internal Ukrainian conflict”. Russia is merely trying to divert attention from its continuous acts of aggression and 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, for which, Russia is solely responsible.
5. In view of our principled position on the illegal annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation, we do not recognise the so-called elections to the Russian State Duma held in the Crimean peninsula on 17-19 September. Likewise, we deeply regret Russia’s decision to involve residents of parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, temporarily outside government control, in these elections after having issued Russian passports on a massive scale to these residents in a simplified and selective manner. These actions violate the sovereignty of Ukraine, run counter to the spirit and objectives of the Minsk agreements and impede the future reintegration process.
6. 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.

7. 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*, 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.