



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1348 Vienna, 9 December 2021

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

1. The European Union welcomes the fact that the Ministerial Council held in Stockholm last week had a clear focus on conflict resolution. Grave concern about the security situation in Ukraine, caused by Russia’s acts of aggression, was expressed by numerous Ministers throughout the Ministerial. Genuine and frank dialogue is of the essence in order to make progress. However, we regret that once again this year, Russia did not engage in the negotiations for a declaration on the OSCE’s efforts towards peace with regard to Ukraine.
2. The EU reiterates its concern about the deteriorating security situation in eastern Ukraine, as a result of the continuing sharp increase in ceasefire violations, and about the military build-up by Russia near the state border with Ukraine. Any threatening or de-stabilising behaviour is unacceptable. We urge Russia to comply with the existing mechanisms under the Vienna Document regarding transparency on irregular movements and to de-escalate tensions.
3. We are also troubled by Russia’s continued actions to minimize the presence of the SMM in the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine. We read with concern the lately very frequent SMM Spot Reports about how the Russia-backed armed formations have prevented the Mission members from crossing the contact line on multiple occasions into the Luhansk region and on two occasions into the Donetsk region of Ukraine. We echo the condemnation made by the Chairperson-in-Office and the Secretary General of the recent systematic and unacceptable obstruction to the SMM’s work. The EU fully supports the SMM in implementing its important mandate and urge the Russian Federation to take up its responsibility and to ensure that all restrictions to the SMM’s work are lifted immediately.

4. Russia's refusal, as a party to the conflict, to act responsibly by engaging constructively in the discussions in the Trilateral Contact Group as well as its obstruction to the holding of another meeting in the Normandy format is causing an ongoing stalemate within these negotiation formats. It has been exactly two years since the last Normandy Summit, which was held in Paris and where the Common Agreed Conclusions were signed. We regret that most of the measures agreed then are still not implemented although agreements on a technical level have been reached in the working groups of the Trilateral Contact Group but remain blocked on political level.
5. The permanent monitoring of the Ukraine-Russia state border currently not under control by the Ukrainian government and verification by the OSCE, including the establishment of security zones in the Ukrainian and Russian border areas, is an important provision of the Minsk agreements. It is therefore regrettable that Russia did not engage in the discussions on the draft Ministerial decision on this topic, put forward by 37 participating States. The adoption of such a decision would have allowed for further progress in the conflict resolution process.
6. We thank the SMM for their recent thematic report on Restrictions to Civilian Freedom of Movement and regret that since the partial closure of the crossing points in the non-government controlled areas in March 2020, civilian crossings have decreased by 95%. Due to the restrictions, civilians have lost their jobs, have been unable to retrieve pensions and have encountered difficulties in accessing medical services. The restrictions have also limited opportunities for people-to-people contacts and further separated families and communities which could impact social cohesion and long-term prospects for reintegration. The EU urges Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to ensure the opening of all currently closed crossing points, including those near Zolote and Shchastia. We underline the importance of reflecting the Human Dimension of the conflict in the Mission's work and reports, as enshrined in its mandate.
7. The EU and representatives of several EU Member States participated in the Ministerial Council side event on the International Crimea Platform. The EU will continue to support efforts to restore Ukraine's control over its entire territory within its internationally recognized borders, including in the context of the Platform.

8. 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 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.

9. 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.