



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1272 Vienna, 18 June 2020

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

Mr Chairperson,

It has now been six months since the Normandy Summit in Paris when the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany agreed on a number of steps to be taken in order to implement the Minsk Agreements, including a full and comprehensive ceasefire. Unfortunately, apart from the extension of the Law on the special order of local self-government in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions and two exchanges of conflict-related detainees, too little has been achieved, despite the constructive approach of the Ukrainian leadership. Instead, there are more casualties every week. SMM reports have confirmed 48 civilian casualties, including six fatalities, between 1 January and 10 June. There were also 110,660 ceasefire violations. Ninety civilian facilities, including operational schools, houses, apartments, and shops, as well as critical gas and electricity infrastructure were damaged as a result of shelling incidents and small-arms fire. This negative trend underlined the urgency and necessity of reaching a comprehensive ceasefire, which is a vital pre-condition for a peaceful resolution to the conflict, and a full restoration of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Establishing and maintaining the disengagement areas are a first step towards reducing tensions along the contact line and creating an atmosphere for reconciliation. Therefore, we hope for more substantial progress during the coming weeks. We take positive note of Ukraine’s decision to increase its political representation in the TCG and commend Ukraine for having the political will to negotiate an end to this conflict.

We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility and to act constructively within the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy format.

The EU remains deeply concerned that the restrictions on the SMM's freedom of movement across the contact line are still in place. It has been three months since they were introduced and the ability of the SMM to remain operational in the non-government controlled areas is declining, as it was recalled several times by Ambassador Cevik. As the SMM has taken stringent measures in order to ensure the health and security of themselves and the local population, there is no legitimate reason to restrict its freedom of movement. Such restrictions are absolutely unacceptable as they are in violation of the SMM's mandate which covers the whole territory of Ukraine,

In addition, the introduction by the de facto authorities in the non-government controlled area of Luhansk of further requirements for the local population as well as entry-permits for persons from the government-controlled areas and a two week compulsory self-isolation further restricts crossing across the contact line. We note with surprise these restrictions at the EECPs while the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints counts more than 1,050 people crossing the non-controlled state border to Russia every day without these obstacles. We call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to lift these undue restrictions both on the SMM and the civilian population.

It is also concerning that the SMM's technical assets are continuously being targeted, as this inhibits the Mission's ability to effectively monitor in the whole territory of Ukraine, especially in the non-government controlled areas. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

The protection of civilians in the conflict zone and the improvement of their situation should be a priority for all sides. Opening of the entry-exit crossing points and other measures, such as the access for humanitarian actors to non-governmental controlled areas and the disbursement of social payments are key as they would ease the lives of the locals, and should be encouraged. The EU therefore calls for a coordinated re-opening of the EECPs that is done in line with WHO recommendations.

We are concerned about all attempts to impose Russian laws and regulations upon the Ukrainian population in the illegally annexed Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, but also in the non-government controlled areas of Donbas. The "passportisation

regime”, where the inhabitants of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk obtain Russian citizenship in a simplified procedure, and are sometimes forced to use the Russian passports in daily life, is one example. We see the same happening now as well in Crimea. Moreover, the recent invitation extended by Russia to holders of illegal Russian passports to participate in the upcoming constitutional referendum in Russia is another violation of the spirit of the Minsk Agreements and of Ukraine’s sovereignty. In addition, we are also concerned about a new law in the so-called People’s Republic of Luhansk stating that Russian is the state language.

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 economic 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 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.