



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1139 Vienna, 30 March 2017

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

The security situation along the line of contact remains, in the words of the SMM, very volatile. The average number of ceasefire violations over the past two months is the highest observed by the SMM for at least 20 months. From 13 to 19 March the SMM noted an escalation in the use of large-calibre weapons proscribed by the Minsk agreements: tanks, mortars and artillery, including multiple-launch rocket systems. These weapons should have been withdrawn in accordance with the Minsk agreements by March 2015. Instead, they remain in use, positioned in violation of agreed withdrawal lines, causing civilian casualties and damaging civilian infrastructure on a regular basis. From April 2014 to February this year, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has recorded more than 33,000 casualties in the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

We therefore again call on all sides to take immediate steps to ensure full respect of the ceasefire, the withdrawal of all Minsk-proscribed weapons, complete disengagement, and comprehensive, safe and unhindered SMM access, including along the Ukrainian-Russian border. Full humanitarian access to areas held by Russia-backed separatists must also be ensured, in line with international humanitarian principles. These are important steps toward a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these fundamental principles must be restored.

To this end, we welcome yesterday's recommitment in the Trilateral Contact Group on a full ceasefire along the whole line of contact and the withdrawal of Minsk-regulated weapons on April 1st, the provision of full baseline information to the SMM by tomorrow noon and practical measures to facilitate the crossing of civilians over

the line of contact. We urge the sides to actively implement what has been agreed. This recommitment needs to be followed by implementation on the ground, we will follow that very closely and we will all assess the sides by their actions, not their words.

The past months have witnessed a quantitative and qualitative shift in the intimidation of SMM monitors: The intimidation occurs more frequently, more brazenly and more aggressively. The overwhelming majority of instances take place in separatist-held areas. In the past few days alone, SMM monitors have been threatened, shot at and detained in separatist-held areas and a UAV was shot at in a government-controlled area. The JCCC has repeatedly failed to take adequate action, despite its responsibility entrusted by the Trilateral Contact Group to contribute to the safety of the SMM monitors and ensuring a rapid response when incidents occur. Moreover, as reported by the SMM, representatives from certain parts of Donetsk have informed that they have taken no measures with regards to those involved in incidents, including those that occurred in Yasynuvata and Pikuzy on 24 February. This is unacceptable. We condemn the ongoing restrictions of the SMM and the deliberate attempts to intimidate the monitors as well as the impunity with which these actions are carried out. Those responsible must be held to account. The safety of monitors is a priority and we urge the parties to exercise restraint. The SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine to be able to implement its mandate. The EU last week renewed its strong support for the SMM with a new contribution by the European Commission of EUR 3 million for satellite imagery. This will allow more in-depth monitoring of the situation in areas to which the SMM has no access.

We again call on the sides in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups to agree on steps toward the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. This includes the modalities of local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in full accordance with Ukrainian legislation, OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. We reiterate our firm position that established conditions for ODIHR monitoring, including ensuring security and access, must first be met.

We remain firm in our 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 in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We call on Russia to

fully assume its responsibility and to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. We again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists, and we remain deeply concerned about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in separatist-held areas. 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 recognise these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilise the situation and reverse moves that contravene these principles. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and we will not recognise it. The European Union will remain committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, 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.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.