



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1270 Vienna, 4 June 2020

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

Mr Chairman, the European Union is deeply concerned about the current situation facing the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. Over the last two and a half months, the COVID-19 pandemic has been used as a pretext to impose further restrictions on the freedom of movement of the SMM. This is in complete violation of its mandate, which encompasses access to the whole territory of Ukraine. Moreover, these restrictions do not only prevent the mission from fulfilling its full mandate, they are also a serious threat to the proper functioning of the Mission. The SMM is set up as a single mission and it must not be broken up in parts. In addition, at the same time as the access of the SMM is hindered, movement across the segment of Ukraine-Russia state border not currently under control of the Ukrainian government continues without such impediments.

Furthermore, we strongly condemn all incidents which have posed a serious risk to the health and life of the SMM monitors. Lately, these incidents are happening more frequently. We have already raised the incidents which occurred in Berezivske on 15 May and in Vesela Hora on 22 May, the latter with small-arms fire being fired from a distance of just 270 metres and passing only 10 metres above the heads of an SMM patrol. On 29 May, near Molodizhne, an explosion occurred 100 meters from another SMM patrol. All of these incidents happened in the non-government controlled area. Such actions are absolutely unacceptable. We also regret the increase in reported incidents of signal interference or firing at UAVs. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held

accountable, both politically and financially. We recall that ensuring the safety and security of Mission staff and assets is the responsibility of all participating States.

Mr. Chairman, the European Union echoes the call by Ambassador Heidi Grau on the sides to take further actions to lower tensions. We also urge the sides to increase their efforts in adhering to a full and comprehensive ceasefire, as was decided in the Normandy Summit in Paris in December. A ceasefire is a first step towards proceeding with the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements. The growing number of civilian casualties highlights the urgent need for a ceasefire. We firmly support the efforts by the Trilateral Contact Group and its representatives from Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE and hope that it will achieve tangible results during its next meetings. We also take positive note of Ukraine's decision to increase its political representation in the TCG. In this context, we commend the Ukrainian leadership for their constructive approach and the political will to negotiate an end to the conflict and call on Russia to act likewise, including within the Trilateral Contact Group.

We also call on the sides to adhere to their previously agreed decisions on disengagement. In this context, we express our strong concern about the violations inside and close to the disengagement areas Zolote and Petrivske.

Mr. Chairman, the European Union remains deeply concerned about the dire situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Ukraine's Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol since its illegal annexation by Russia. Over the past six years, residents of the peninsula, and in particular the Crimean Tatars, have been facing systematic restrictions of the human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association, religion or belief. The situation of persons belonging to national minorities remains precarious. Reports point out a narrowing of space for manifestation of Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar identities and enjoyment of the respective cultures in Crimea. Additionally, the conscription campaigns, which have since 2014 drafted over 21 000 individuals to the Russian army, violate international humanitarian law. Moreover, Russia's decree adding most of Crimea and Sevastopol to the list of border territories of the Russian Federation in which non-Russian citizens are prevented from owning land is yet another attempt to forcibly integrate the illegally-annexed peninsula into Russia and to impose Russian citizenship in the peninsula.

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 UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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