



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1309 Vienna, 15 April 2021

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

The European Union is deeply concerned about the recent unusual military activities of the Russian Federation in the areas adjacent to the state border of Ukraine and in the illegally-annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. This significant military build-up risks leading to an escalation of the conflict. The refusal of the Russian Federation to engage in a meaningful dialogue in the meetings conducted in the framework of the risk reduction mechanism as foreseen in paragraph 16 of the Vienna Document is regrettable. We have all signed up to the Vienna Document precisely to reduce military risks and misperceptions and to improve understanding of threat perceptions and build trust among participating States.

In line with the recommendations we delivered at the PC-FSC meeting yesterday, we again urge Russia to take steps to de-escalate the situation and to engage in a meaningful dialogue and constructive consultations. We also urge Russia to provide, in accordance with its commitments under the Vienna Document, full transparency on its military activities. Furthermore, we call on Russia to voluntarily host a visit to dispel concerns about its military activities, in accordance with the provisions under paragraph 18 of the Vienna Document.

We are also concerned about the increase of tensions at the contact line and the deterioration of the security situation in the area. The SMM noted in its weekly report of 6 April an almost three-fold increase of ceasefire violations for the second consecutive week. The rise in casualties and fatalities among the civilian population

and Ukrainian military personnel is also very worrying. When transparency and mutual confidence are in short supply, any provocation or the spread of disinformation can have dire consequences.

We regret that the recent meetings of the Trilateral Contact Group did not result in the renewal of the ceasefire commitments, as the Russian Federation refused to engage constructively. We commend Ukraine for its constructive approach and urge Russia to display a similar attitude. We call upon the sides to abide by the terms of the recommitment to the ceasefire of last July and, in this regard, urge the Russian Federation to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs. We also call upon the sides to refrain from actions and rhetoric that lead to heightened tensions and to step up instead their efforts in implementing the Minsk agreements. In particular, we urge the Russian Federation to provide full transparency on its military activities which are a matter of strong concern for other participating States.

We are also troubled by the fact that the restrictions on freedom of movement of the SMM and its technical assets continue, overwhelmingly in the non-government controlled areas, as described in the latest SMM thematic report. On 6 April, an SMM long-range UAV experienced severe difficulties due to GPS interference, several UAVs were jammed and shot at, of which one was lost. On 8 April, the Russia-backed armed formations again denied an SMM patrol passage at the checkpoint near Oleksandrivka for the fourth time in recent weeks. We call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to ensure the SMM safety and security and enable the SMM to access the whole territory of Ukraine, including Crimea, in accordance with its mandate.

The European Union condemns all attempts to impose Russian laws and regulations upon the Ukrainian population in the illegally-annexed Crimean peninsula and in the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine. We are therefore concerned that Russia has recently launched yet another conscription campaign in Crimea, as this is another violation of international humanitarian law. We also call on Russia to end its policy of issuing Russian passports in a simplified and selective manner to a large number of Ukrainian citizens. This practice directly contradicts the spirit and the objectives of the Minsk agreements and constitutes a clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty.

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.

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 and LIECHTENSTEIN, 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.