



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1324 Vienna, 15 July 2021

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

Madam Chair, the European Union is highly concerned about the unprecedented increase in interferences with the SMM’s technical assets since March this year, which have led to the loss of an increasing number of UAVs, including long-range UAVs. We deeply regret that on 8 July, a member of the Russia-backed armed formations threatened to shoot down one of the SMM’s mini-unmanned aerial vehicles near Vilkhivka, while conducting an announced flight. Such actions impede the effective monitoring and are a clear violation of the free access of the SMM to the entire territory of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders.

The EU recalls its continued strong support for the Border Observation Mission at the two Russian checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk. Effective and comprehensive monitoring of this border is an integral part of a sustainable political solution to this conflict in line with the Minsk Agreements. Due to Russian opposition to renew the 4-months mandate of the BOM as customary, it was with reluctance that we accepted a mandate of only two months in May. Longer mandates would reduce the administrative burden of the mission and facilitate planning. We urge the Russian Federation to reconsider its position with regard to longer mandates.

The frequent SMM reports about the presence of modern Russian military equipment in eastern Ukraine underline the need for more transparency on what is happening at the Ukraine-Russia State border currently not controlled by the Ukrainian government. The expansion of the BOM would be a long-awaited step in this regard. Nevertheless, we also

call for the unrestricted access of the SMM to all border areas, in accordance with its mandate. In this vein, we recall our support for the plans of the SMM to open additional Forward Patrol Bases in the areas under effective control by Russia backed armed formations, closer to the border.

The European Union is deeply concerned about the health and well-being of the civilian population living in the conflict area. Last week, the SMM corroborated reports of five injured civilians. Three of them were injured by explosive objects, one as a result of gunfire and one due to shelling. This brings the total civilian casualties in 2021 to 44, including 11 fatalities, of which 30 were men, five women, six boys and three girls. Over 70% were due to mines and unexploded ordnance and 16% due to small-arms fire. We again repeat our call on the sides to adhere to the ceasefire and to do their utmost in order to move forward on the new demining plan in the TCG.

We took note of the valuable insights Ambassador Grau gave us in her last PC appearance last week. We especially noted her remarks about the lack of political will in the Trilateral Contact Group and the need for further political guidance from the Normandy format in order to advance in the discussions of the Trilateral Contact Group. Russia's attempts to legitimize the so-called "people's republics" in eastern Ukraine are not constructive. We therefore urge Russia, as a party to the conflict, to act responsibly and to engage in discussions within these conflict resolution formats in good faith.

These are difficult times for the Ukrainian people, tackling the socio-economic impact of the pandemic while Russia continues its acts of aggression. We therefore welcome the Ukraine Reform Conference held in Vilnius on 7-8 July. The EU will continue to strengthen its close partnership with Ukraine and to support Ukraine, politically and economically, in its efforts to achieve structural reforms and to make its economy more resilient.

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, 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.