



## EUROPEAN UNION

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### EU Statement on Russia's further aggression against Ukraine

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Mr. Chair, there is **no ambiguity** about the origins of the current crisis. It stems from Russia's **continuous, blatant breach of international law and disregard of OSCE principles and commitments**. The Helsinki Final Act is crystal clear in stating that **"the participating States will refrain** in their mutual relations, as well as in their international relations in general, **from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State**, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations".

For the last few months, we have been witnessing an unprovoked and unjustified large-scale **military build-up by Russia** near the border with Ukraine, including in Belarus and in and around the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula as well as Russia's increased military presence in the Black and Azov Seas. Instead of upholding its commitments and engaging in an honest dialogue, including within the transparency mechanisms on unusual military activities as set out in the Vienna Document, the Russian Federation chose again to boycott the meetings in question, which was disrespectful to the Organisation and all participating States.

This week, with the conflict entering its 9<sup>th</sup> year, we saw another unprecedented escalation. **The decision by the Russian Federation to recognise certain areas of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts** as independent entities and **sending Russian troops** there is **illegal and unacceptable**. It violates international law, Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, contradicts Russia's own international

commitments and further escalates the crisis. It also violates and undermines the Minsk agreements, which are the basis for lasting peace and stability. **Russia**, as a signatory of the Minsk agreements, **has a clear and direct responsibility to work to find a peaceful settlement of the conflict it started**, in line with these principles.

**We urge Russia**, as a party to the conflict, **to reverse the recognition**, uphold its commitments, abide by international law and return to the negotiating table, engaging in discussions within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. **We call on other States not to follow Russia's illegal decision** to recognise this self-proclaimed independence.

Mr. Chair, we should all be worried **when a nuclear nation is calling another nation a historical mistake** which has to be fixed. It is **no time to sit on the fence**.

**The EU and its Member States are united and determined to react with a robust and swift response to the illegal actions by the Russian Federation**, in close coordination with international partners. A first package of sanctions will be adopted without delay.

**We warn Russia against using the newly signed pacts with the self-proclaimed "republics" as a pretext for taking further military steps against Ukraine**. The EU stands ready to swiftly adopt more wide-ranging political and economic sanctions.

Over the past few weeks, we witnessed **intensive diplomatic efforts**, including at the highest political levels, to resolve the unprecedented tensions in the region. The EU and its Member States strongly support the path of dialogue and diplomacy – it is the only way to solve this crisis. It is **up to Russia to seize this chance, the door for dialogue remains open**. We recall that our **Organisation**, due to its inclusiveness and its comprehensive approach to security, **is well-equipped to discuss security concerns** of any participating State. We applaud the efforts of the Polish OSCE Chair in this regard and call upon all participating States to engage constructively in this

initiative to restore peace and trust.

Mr. Chair, the **increasingly dire security and humanitarian situation** in eastern Ukraine is alarming. We've witnessed in recent days a dramatic increase in ceasefire violations along the line of contact. We condemn the use of heavy weaponry and indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas. **We commend Ukraine's posture of restraint in the face of continued provocations and efforts at destabilisation.**

It is **extremely worrying that staged events were created as a pretext for escalation.** We have been witnessing an intensification of manipulation efforts to support such objectives and deplore such inflammatory rhetoric. **There is no ground for allegations** of a possible Ukrainian attack nor for Ukrainian attacks on Russian-speaking populations.

We reiterate our **deep appreciation to the SMM** staff for their professionalism, impartiality and dedication to operate in an extremely challenging security environment, amidst the heightened international tensions and the increasing restrictions to the SMM's freedom of movement in the areas controlled by Russia. Their security and safety remain our first priority.

We reiterate **our unwavering support** to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders and call upon Russia to do likewise. We **strongly condemn the clear violations of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by Russia** since February 2014, including the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, which we will not recognise, as well as the recognition of non-government controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine as independent entities. **We stand by and will continue to support Ukraine and its people.**

Mr. Chair, I request that this statement be attached to the Journal of the Day.

The Candidate Countries the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\* and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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