



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1265 Vienna, 30 April 2020

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

Mr. Chairman, at this moment during one of the worst pandemics ever experienced, our thoughts go to the people living on both sides of the line of contact in eastern Ukraine. Even before the pandemic started, more than 3,5 million people needed humanitarian assistance and protection. There were already problems concerning water and electricity supplies on top of the tragic but regular occurrence of civilian casualties and shelling of civilian infrastructure. Moreover, as a result of the pandemic and the restrictions imposed under this pretext, the people of eastern Ukraine are now also suffering from income losses, difficulties in obtaining their pensions and issues with accessing health care. This situation is untenable. This is why the European Commission has pledged another EUR 13 Million to support the most vulnerable people affected by the ongoing hostilities. EU-funded humanitarian projects will also help address the coronavirus outbreak. The European Union stands in full solidarity with Ukraine and its people.

The European Union remains gravely concerned about the increasing restrictions of movement the SMM is facing in non-government controlled areas under the pretext of the COVID-19 pandemic. We strongly condemn this serious violation of the Mission’s mandate which is also jeopardising the Mission’s ability to work in the non-government controlled areas. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to meet the Minsk commitments in full and to stop this hindrance of the SMM to fulfil its mandate. We condemn the intentional spread of disinformation related to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as to the SMM. Furthermore,

as the Mission's technical assets are of vital importance during the current circumstances for the Mission's ability to implement its mandate, we deplore any action that endangers the functioning of these assets. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially. The EU call on the sides to honour their commitments.

Still, the recently introduced restrictions of movements of the SMM are only the latest in a long-term trend. As stated in the SMM Thematic Report on Restrictions of Movements and Other Impediments between July and December 2019, the Mission continues to face restrictions to its freedom of movement, overwhelmingly in the non-government-controlled areas in southern Donetsk region. Its UAVs continue to be subjected to GPS signal interference as well as to gunfire. In the non-government controlled areas, the Mission continued to face impediments in establishing and reporting facts following special incidents. And, finally, the failure to remove existing mines, unexploded ordnance and other explosive objects or laying of new ones continued to impede the Mission's freedom of movement. Mr. Chairman, this trend is overly concerning and must be reversed. The SMM's safe, secure and unhindered access to the whole territory of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, is crucial to the implementation of its mandate.

The EU remains concerned about the human rights situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, illegally annexed by the Russian Federation. It has now been four years since Russia banned the Crimean Tatar Mejlis. We urge the Russian Federation to comply with the order of the International Court of Justice of 19 April 2017 to lift this ban. We call on Russia to refrain from imposing any limitations on the religious, cultural, public and private life of the Crimean Tatar community.

The European Union welcomes the continued work in the Trilateral Contact group and the Normandy Format, despite the current circumstances. The restoration of the full sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders is key for a sustainable resolution of the conflict. In addition to the mutual release and exchange of conflict related detainees on 16 April, we look forward to further progress on the designation of new entry-exit checkpoints and new

disengagement areas. We welcome the demining activities of the Ukrainian Forces around cemeteries in recent weeks and encourage the sides to continue demining other critical civilian infrastructure such as entry-exit checkpoints and schools. We commend the Ukrainian leadership for its constructive approach to put an end to this conflict and call on Russia to act likewise, including within the TCG.

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 and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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