



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1267 Vienna, 14 May 2020

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

Mr Chairman, the European Union is deeply worried about the deteriorating situation on the ground in eastern Ukraine. During the last weeks, we have seen a sharp increase in ceasefire violations and in the number of civilian casualties, including children. During the first week of May, SMM reported 19 civilian casualties, the highest weekly figure of civilian casualties for the last two years. We deplore that the total number of civilian casualties already reached 65 this year, which shows the negative trend, as it is one third higher than during the same period in 2019. Despite some positive steps on the government-controlled side of the contact line, demining around civilian infrastructure remains insufficient and more and more people get injured by mines and unexploded ordnance.

The European Union is deeply concerned about the fact that the freedom of movement of the SMM continues to be restricted. We condemn the very concerning incident of 8 May when an SMM patrol was stopped in Horlivka by members of the Russian-backed armed formations. The patrol members were physically harassed, intimidated and hindered from leaving the location for almost three hours, as depicted in an SMM Spot Report. This is an unacceptable event and a serious threat to the civilian monitors of the SMM when fulfilling their mandate. We further condemn the fact that SMM patrols are repeatedly denied access to non-government controlled areas. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full and to stop this hindrance to the SMM in fulfilling its mandate. We once again deplore shelling in close vicinity of SMM patrols and the targeting of SMM assets, including SMM UAVs, by means of signal interference and small arms fire. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction, or loss of SMM UAVs, and other assets, should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

The European Union stands in full solidarity with Ukraine and its people in the face of the current pandemic. This is why we are mobilising two COVID-response packages for Ukraine, together amounting to EUR 190 Million with support including for immediate healthcare needs, strengthening the healthcare system, social relief, fighting disinformation and support to small businesses. We are also providing immediate assistance. For example, with EU funding, the UN supplied medical workers from the Emergency Medical Care Centre of Donetsk Oblast with 100 sets of personal protective equipment for ambulance teams, while medical facilities in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts received more than seventy litres of highly concentrated antiseptic liquid. Similar medical support is also given by EU Member States. Via our partners, we also work with small businesses and civil society including in eastern Ukraine, disseminate information about COVID-19 and support healthcare professionals with specific online training. The EU is also mobilising humanitarian support for vulnerable people on both sides of the contact line in coordination with EU Member States as well as other international donors. We underline the importance of access of humanitarian organisations to the whole territory of Ukraine, including Crimea, and call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to ensure it.

However, there is one thing that is fundamental when rebuilding a society severely damaged by both war and a pandemic. That is a comprehensive ceasefire. The videoconference of Normandy Four Foreign Ministers on 30 April was a timely reminder of the need to intensify the efforts towards the implementation of the commitments in good faith, including those undertaken at the Normandy Summit in Paris on 9 December. Complying with previous agreements is a prerequisite for building confidence and the basis for making further progress. This is why we hope that the sides will recommit to a full and comprehensive ceasefire during the meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group today, and to move forward in their discussions of further exchanges of detainees, new disengagement areas as well as a new demining plan. In this context we commend the constructive approach of the Ukrainian leadership and call on Russia to act likewise, including within the Trilateral Contact Group.

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*, 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.