



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1277 Vienna, 30 July 2020

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

The European Union welcomes the agreement reached on 22 July in the Trilateral Contact Group on the additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire, which aim to ensure compliance with a comprehensive, sustainable and unlimited ceasefire, which came into force on 27 July. We join Ambassador Grau in her hopes that these measures will bring more peace to the civilian population. While following the situation closely, we welcome the initial positive effects of the ceasefire and call on the sides to fully respect the ceasefire measures agreed.

We hope that these ceasefire measures will give the sides a well-needed respite period which can be used to construct a security environment that would facilitate a sustainable political settlement of the conflict. The EU stands firm in its support to the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy Format in their work to find and agree additional measures to enable the full implementation of the Minsk agreements and to restore Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We commend Ukraine for its constructive approach and political will to negotiate an end to this conflict and call on Russia to live up to its responsibility as a signatory of the Minsk agreements by implementing its provisions and by acting constructively within the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy Format. In this regard, we welcome the recent direct contacts between President Putin and President Zelenskyy as an encouraging sign of dialogue.

The EU also welcomes the progress made regarding further exchange of information on conflict-related detainees and calls upon the sides to do their utmost in order to reach an early agreement for another mutual release and exchange of detainees.

Furthermore, we welcome the reconfirmation in the Humanitarian Working Group of the readiness for the simultaneous opening of two additional entry-exit crossing points in Zolote and Schastia of the Luhansk region, no later than 10 November 2020. We urge for an immediate start of the preparatory and construction works.

Despite the ceasefire in place, the security situation in the conflict areas in eastern Ukraine remains tense, unpredictable and could again deteriorate quickly. There are constantly people inside the Zolote and Petrivske disengagement areas at night and the SMM is repeatedly observing freshly-dug trenches, for instance near government-controlled Orikhove and non-government-controlled Holubivske in the Luhansk region. SMM's assets are still being targeted, for instance on 24 July in Chernenko in the Donetsk region and on 25 July near Orikhove in the Luhansk region. We call on the sides to disengage, withdraw heavy weapons and step up efforts on comprehensive mine action.

Mr. Chairman, the SMM remains our source of reliable information on the situation on the ground. Their freedom of movement cannot be unduly hindered. We take positive note of the fact that a number of SMM staff members have been able to cross the contact line to join the SMM teams in the non-government controlled areas, after obtaining a medical certificate issued by the SMM. Nonetheless, according to its mandate, the SMM should have access to the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, including the Crimean Peninsula, which is illegally annexed by Russia. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to make sure that all remaining undue restrictions on the SMM are lifted immediately. In addition, we recall that those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially. We look forward to having the results of a thorough investigation of all such incidents reported to the Permanent Council.

Furthermore, the continued steps by Russia to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity by efforts to forcibly integrate the illegally-annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol into Russia are a violation of international law. The keel-laying ceremony of two multi-purpose assault ships in Kerch on 20 July is another step in the ongoing militarisation of

the peninsula, which has a considerable negative impact on regional security in the Black Sea. In addition, we are concerned about the latest restrictions of the freedom of movement for Ukrainian citizens to and from the Crimean peninsula. Access to mainland Ukraine and the right to return to the place of residence has to be granted unconditionally and must not require a Russian passport.

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 the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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