



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1260 Vienna, 27 February 2020

EU Statement on Six Years of Illegal Annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation

Mr. Chairperson, it has now been six years since Russia covertly used its military to seize Ukrainian territory by force and illegally annexed the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. This act, which we do not and will not recognise, is in complete violation of international law and our shared commitments and principles. It has grave implications for the rules-based international legal order that protects the territorial integrity, unity and sovereignty of all States and therefore it continues to threaten international security. For this reason, the EU condemns the illegal annexation and reiterates that we remain fully committed to implementing the non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

Over the past six years, we have seen Russia forcing integration of the illegally annexed Crimea in different ways. The Russian Federation attempted to give its military actions a veneer of legitimacy with an illegal referendum. This so-called “referendum” was a blatant violation of the Ukrainian constitution. Ukrainian media was shut down so that pro-Russian propaganda could dominate. The vote was prepared in less than 20 days in a heavily militarised environment of intimidation with no credible election observers present. It was not recognised as legitimate by the international community. As a response to this attempted annexation, on March 27, 2014, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution No 68/262 “Territorial Integrity of Ukraine”.

We are deeply concerned about the increasing militarization of the Crimean peninsula by Russia. This continues to impact the security situation in the Black Sea region and

beyond. We condemn the construction of the Kerch bridge which took place without the consent of Ukraine, and we call on Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage to and from the Sea of Azov in accordance with international law.

We are also concerned about the policy of imposition of citizenship by Russia in the occupied peninsula as well as illegal expropriation of Ukrainian assets there. The EU recalls its position of not recognizing the Russian passports issued to the residents of the occupied peninsula after its annexation, and calls on other participating States to act likewise. In addition, Russia's organising so called "elections" in Crimea and Sevastopol, most recently on 8 September 2019, was another breach of Ukraine's sovereignty. The EU condemns any such illegal integration activities and calls on Russia to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Furthermore, as a consequence of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, the human rights situation in the peninsula continued to deteriorate in 2019. Systematic repression of individuals opposing the illegal annexation continued unabated. The activities of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis remain banned since 2016 under Russian law and wide-ranging intimidation and persecution of the community are witnessed on a daily basis. Arrests of Crimean Tatars and searches of their homes have intensified, while restrictions on fundamental freedoms persist. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights also continued to receive credible reports of inhumane conditions in places of detention in Crimea.

The EU calls for full compliance with international human rights standards in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. All pending cases of human rights violations and abuses, such as enforced disappearances, torture and killings should be thoroughly investigated and those responsible brought to justice. All those detained and sentenced in breach of international law should be released immediately. Journalists, human rights defenders and defence lawyers should be able to work independently and without undue interference. International human rights monitoring missions and human rights non-governmental organisations must have access to Crimea, in line with relevant UN resolutions. Also, the SMM must be allowed to monitor the situation in Crimea, in accordance with its mandate.

Since March 2014, the EU has imposed restrictive measures in response to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and to Russia's deliberate destabilisation of Ukraine. We recall our unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and call on Russia to act likewise.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, 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, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.