



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1335 Vienna, 16 September 2021

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

Final (826 words)

1. We regret that the security situation in eastern Ukraine, following Russia’s continuous acts of aggression, remains tense and volatile. The SMM reports a considerable further increase in the number of ceasefire violations since April this year and an increase in the presence and use of Minsk-proscribed weapons, including in residential areas. We are also concerned about the fact that the disengagement area near Zolote has also become a hotspot for ceasefire violations, just as the Petrivske disengagement area, has been for a long time. This backsliding trend is highly worrisome, especially as it also increases the number of civilian and military casualties as well as damages to civilian properties and infrastructure. So far in 2021, the SMM has confirmed 62 civilian casualties, including 15 fatalities, and during the last month, shelling has been the main source of civilian casualties.
2. It is also highly concerning that the SMM long-range UAV flights have been temporarily suspended due to a crash by one of these UAVs on 29 June caused by jamming. We have taken positive note of the announcement by the SMM that the flights should resume at the end of September from a new launching site further away from the contact line. Hopefully, this will have a positive impact upon the safety when operating these valuable assets. We deplore any deliberate targeting of the SMM and its assets and reiterate that those responsible for the destruction of the SMM’s equipment should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

3. The 96% decrease in crossings over the line of contact compared to pre-Covid-19 restrictions is alarming. This has meant a significant reduction in people-to-people contacts and has obstructed access for residents in the non-government controlled areas to pension payments, social services and health care. At the same time, the Border Monitoring Mission to Gukovo and Donetsk reports that the crossings they observe at the Russia-Ukraine state border have returned to pre-pandemic levels. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to open the Zolote and Shchastia check points, in line with the Normandy Summit agreement in Paris, as well as to enable the opening of all currently closed check points.
4. Monitoring of the Ukraine-Russia state border is an important requisite of the Minsk agreements and consequently an integral part of a sustainable resolution of this conflict. We are therefore deeply disappointed that Russia, as a party to the conflict and one of the signatories of the Minsk agreements, has decided to not agree to an extension of the mandate of the Border Observation Mission to Gukovo and Donetsk. This happens at a time when the SMM is systematically being denied access to the border areas in non-government controlled areas. It is an unfortunate political signal confirming Russia's lack of political will to contribute to the peaceful resolution of the conflict.
5. We deplore the issuing of Russian passports on a massive scale to Ukrainian citizens in a simplified and selective manner. We are also concerned about the plans by the Russian Central Election Committee to involve residents of the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula and residents of other non-government controlled areas in the 19 September elections. Such measures violate the sovereignty of Ukraine, contradict the objectives of the Minsk agreements and impede the future reintegration process.
6. 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 the 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 sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.

7. 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.