



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1338 Vienna, 7 October 2021

EU Statement in response to the update by the Special Representative of the CiO in Ukraine and in the TCG, Ambassador Mikko Kinnunen, and to the Report by the SMM Chief Monitor, Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik

1. The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Mikko Kinnunen and Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik to the Permanent Council. It is a particular pleasure to have Ambassador Kinnunen here today, for his first update in his new capacity. We are sure that your knowledge and experience will be a true asset to the work of the TCG and we assure you of our utmost support.
2. We thank Ambassador Çevik for his report. We are also grateful for the latest SMM thematic report on the gender dimension which shows how dramatically the conflict affects women in the conflict zone. We welcome the SMM's strong focus on the women, peace and security agenda throughout its work and would underline once again the importance of the human dimension within SMM activities and reporting.
3. We take note of the fact that in the year since the introduction of the additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire, violations have dropped by 80%. Still, we regret the negative trend since the beginning of the year, with significant increases in civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure, as well as nearly twice the number of ceasefire violations in and around the Zolote and Petrivske disengagement areas and a doubling of the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons compared to the previous three months. It is also concerning that last month we saw the highest number of ceasefire violations since the ceasefire measures were introduced. We particularly regret that the sides have not

been able to agree to a functioning coordination and verification mechanism as envisaged in the additional measures of 22 July 2020.

4. We are also worried about the ongoing trend of chronic restrictions on the SMM monitoring, 90% of which are reported in the non-government controlled areas. These impediments include restrictions of the SMM's freedom of movement in violation of its mandate as well as increasingly severe jamming and targeting of SMM technical assets by small-arms fire which also led to the temporary suspension of SMM's long-range UAV flights for most of the reporting period. Those responsible must be held accountable, both politically and financially. In addition, long-range UAVs are essential for monitoring areas where SMM access is systematically limited, such as border areas temporarily not under Ukrainian government control and on the routes leading there. The SMM should have full and unhindered access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to make sure that all restrictions on the SMM's freedom of movement and impediments to the Mission's technical assets are removed.
5. Dear Ambassadors, we commend your tireless efforts within the Trilateral Contact Group and hope that the deadlock we have seen in the discussions during the last year, due to the lack of political will, will soon be overcome. We welcome the fact that the economic and the humanitarian working groups resumed substantial discussions during their last meetings. We would like to see progress on the opening of the Zolote and Shchastia EECPs also on the NGCA side, in compliance with the Normandy Summit conclusions agreed in Paris 2019, as well as the reopening of all other checkpoints which are currently closed.
6. Madam Chair, the EU would like to reiterate that the Minsk agreements, signed by the Russian Federation, are unambiguous in stating that the TCG consists of representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE, with the latter as the mediator. Russia has therefore clearly accepted its binding responsibility in the peaceful settlement of the conflict. In this respect, Russia's attempts to legitimize the so-called "people's republics" in eastern Ukraine are not constructive. We decisively reject the Russian narrative of portraying itself as a mediator of a so-called "internal Ukrainian

conflict” and we urge Russia, as a party to the conflict, to engage constructively in the TCG discussions and to implement the Minsk agreements in full.

7. Russia’s decision not to agree to an extension of the Border Observer Mission was another setback for the conflict resolution process also considering that the Minsk Protocol of 2014 assigns a role for the OSCE in ensuring permanent monitoring on the Ukraine-Russia state border and verification by the OSCE, together with the creation of a safety zone in the border areas of Ukraine and Russia. In order to create more transparency, we would support SMM in opening forward patrol bases close to the border, as well as a much wider use of long range UAVs in their work and we would like to enquire Ambassador Çevik’s views on this.
8. 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.
9. 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 the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, and ALBANIA*, 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 and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.