



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1349 Vienna, 16 December 2021

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

1. The European Union remains deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation with regard to Ukraine, including about Russia’s military build-up near the border with Ukraine and in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. We call on Russia to de-escalate, to pursue diplomatic channels, and to comply with the existing mechanisms under the Vienna Document regarding transparency on irregular movements of its military forces. Any de-stabilising behaviour or hostile rhetoric is unacceptable. We reiterate the right of every sovereign State to freely choose the course of its foreign and security policy, as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris. All European Union Member States were clear during the Foreign Affairs Council on 13 December that any further aggression against Ukraine will come with massive consequences and with a high economic cost for Russia. In this regard, we will closely coordinate with our transatlantic and likeminded partners.
2. Russia’s continued actions to minimize the presence of the SMM in the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine is highly worrying. We echo the concerns expressed by Chief Monitor Cevik during the latest informal briefing regarding the increasingly challenging environment in which the SMM is operating in the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine. Recurrent hostile rhetoric including threats of violence, interference with its technical assets and unprecedented restrictions to its freedom of movement are some of the daily impediments the Mission is facing. Moreover, it is unacceptable that the Russia-backed armed formations delay or prevent SMM patrols from crossing the contact line, thus forcing the Mission to consider alternative routes with more than 10 hours delay, which risks rendering some patrols logistically impossible. The European

Union reiterates its condemnation of these systematic obstructions to the SMM's work. We fully support the SMM in implementing its important mandate and urge the Russian Federation to take up its responsibility and to ensure that all restrictions to the SMM's work are lifted immediately.

3. Madam Chair, looking back at this year, the recent deterioration of the security situation follows a trend of increasing tensions. At the beginning of the year, the additional ceasefire measures agreed in July 2020 were in general adhered to, however the measures introduced in March 2020 to limit civilian crossings of the contact line were still in place. In April, the security situation became volatile as we saw the unusual military build-up of the Russian forces at the Ukrainian borders and in illegally annexed Crimea. There was also an increase in obstructions to the SMM's freedom of movement, including severe jamming of long-range UAVs. Then, transparency along the Russia-Ukraine border suffered another setback in September when Russia blocked the extension of the OSCE Border Observer Mission in Gukovo and Donetsk. It was also in September that residents of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, temporarily outside government control, were involved in the Russian Duma Elections after having selectively received Russian passports. In October and November, the SMM freedom of movement was restricted even further in the non-government controlled areas and monitors were blocked in their lodgings. We also noted that the numbers of ceasefire violations were in some weeks even higher than before July 2020 and that the security guarantee mechanism, which provided for local ceasefires allowing for maintenance and repair of critical civilian infrastructure, was no longer operational.
4. These actions on the ground have been accompanied by a long stalemate in the Trilateral Contact Group due to Russia's unwillingness, as a party to the conflict, to assume its responsibility in implementing the Minsk agreements and to engage in the TCG discussions in good faith. Equally worrying is that no Normandy Summit has been possible since the meeting in Paris two years ago. We are still expecting Russia to show a similar readiness as Ukraine in implementing the Common Agreed Conclusions from this meeting. Political considerations should not stand in the way of humanitarian needs.
5. 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 sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.

6. 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.