



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1255 Vienna, 16 January 2020

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

1. Mr. Chairperson, the conflict in Ukraine remains the most pressing security challenge in Europe. A sustainable political solution to this conflict is a top priority for the EU. Such a solution must restore respect for Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. The full implementation of the Minsk Agreements is paramount in this regard, as well as unconditional respect of the ceasefire and full, safe, unconditional and unhindered access for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission throughout Ukraine.
2. We welcome that there have been some positive developments last year and the continued international diplomatic efforts within the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy format. We urge the sides to implement the commitments, including those undertaken at the Normandy Summit on 9 December, in good faith. In this context, we commend the Ukrainian leadership for the constructive approach and the political will to negotiate an end to the conflict.
3. We also commend the role of the TCG in the facilitation of the mutual release of detainees that took place on 29 December. As a result, 76 Ukrainian citizens were released from the captivity in the non-government controlled areas. This was a welcome step in the right direction. However, the efforts towards the

release of all the detainees held under false or far-fetched pretext, including Crimean Tatars, should continue.

4. There is still a lot of work in front of us this year, in particular ahead of the next N4 summit. We commend the Albanian Chairmanship for placing the resolution of the conflict in Ukraine at the top of the agenda. In this respect, we welcome and look forward to the CiO's first visit to Ukraine next week. We also extend our best wishes to the new Special Representative in Ukraine, Ambassador Heidi Grau. The TCG will continue to play a crucial role in the implementation of the Minsk Agreements and the N4 commitments.
5. One of the most urgent tasks remains the implementation of a full, unlimited and comprehensive ceasefire, as agreed at the Normandy Four Summit on 9 December 2019. Too many lives have already been lost. Although the number of ceasefire violations remained limited during the holiday period, we regret that there were still incidents resulting in further casualties among civilians and Ukrainian military personnel. We also reiterate the urgency of the work that remains to be done in the de-mining process, including the development and implementation of an updated de-mining plan and new priority areas, as agreed at the Normandy Four Summit. Further, we call on the sides to improve the conditions and significantly reduce waiting time for civilians at the entry-exit check points where many elderly people died because of hardships.
6. We welcome the call of the N4 for safe and secure access of the SMM throughout Ukraine, with a view to the implementation of its mandate to the full extent. The safety and security of the SMM is of primary importance. We recall our position that any impediments to the SMM's work, including attempts to destroy SMM's assets, are unacceptable. We deplore targeting of SMM assets, including SMM UAVs by means of signal interference and small arms fire at least on six occasions in the last three weeks on both sides on the contact line.

Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM UAVs and other assets should be held accountable, both politically and financially.

7. We also look forward to the designation of the three new disengagement areas and commend the SMM for its role and professionalism in monitoring the disengagement process. We reiterate the importance of safe and unhindered access for the SMM to monitor the three existing disengagement areas, including Petrivske. We are concerned by SMM reports of ceasefire violations assessed as inside the Petrivske disengagement area and of persons in military-style clothing inside the disengagement area, near the former positions of the Russia-backed armed formations. It is also unacceptable that on 7 January 2019 a member of the armed formations attempted to obtain a signature from an SMM patrol on a declaration incorrectly stating that the ceasefire violations were outside the disengagement area.
8. We reiterate our utmost concern about the Russian presidential decrees and their extensions, enabling the simplified granting of Russian citizenship to Ukrainian citizens, which constitutes yet another attack on the sovereignty of Ukraine and runs counter to the spirit and objectives of the Minsk agreements. We do not recognise these passports issued on the basis of these decrees and we call on other OSCE participating States to do likewise.
9. We condemn yet another step towards further forced integration of the illegally-annexed Crimean Peninsula with the Russian Federation, by opening at the end of last year the railway section of the Kerch bridge and railway traffic from Russia to the Crimean Peninsula, without Ukraine's consent.. This constitutes another violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity by Russia.
10. We continue to call on Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage to and from the Sea of Azov in accordance with international law.

11. 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.
12. 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 the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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