



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1325 Vienna, 22 July 2021

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

Final (841 words)

1. Madam Chair, let us first say that the Minsk Agreements are unambiguous in stating that the TCG consists of Ukraine and the Russian Federation with the OSCE as mediator. The EU therefore deplores and decisively rejects the distorted narrative that Russia advances, presenting itself as a mediator of an “internal Ukrainian conflict” and attempting to legitimize the so-called “people’s republics” in eastern Ukraine. Russia is merely trying to divert attention from its continuous acts of aggression and its undermining of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, including by its illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula, which contradicts its obligations under international law. These actions are a severe threat to the European Security Order, and for that, Russia is solely responsible.
2. It is now one year since the additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire were agreed and entered into force. This agreement was an outstanding achievement for the Trilateral Contact Group under the leadership of Ambassador Heidi Grau and it has resulted in some positive developments on the ground and a more secure daily life for thousands of civilians living in the conflict-affected area. However, there are still almost daily violations of the ceasefire, which have unfortunately increased in frequency and gravity since November last year. Only last week, the ceasefire was violated 1,558 times according to the SMM report. These violations continue to take a heavy toll on the civilian population and among the servicemen in the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Last week, three servicemen were

killed and twelve injured and populated areas and inhabited houses were again hit and damaged by shelling. We again repeat our call on the sides to adhere to the ceasefire and commend Ukraine for its restraint in responding to the provocations.

3. Madam Chair, we welcome President Zelenskyy's initiative to convene the Summit of the Crimea Platform on 23 August, as well as all diplomatic efforts aiming at restoring Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. European Council President Charles Michel and Executive Vice President of the European Commission Valdis Dombrovskis, as well as leaders from many EU Member States, will be present in Kyiv on this occasion.
4. Highlighting Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in international fora is of high importance also for the local population, as the human rights situation continues to deteriorate. We deeply deplore the persistent attacks against residents, and in particular against Crimean Tatars, who oppose the illegal annexation. In this context, we condemn the sentencing of Remzi Bekirov, a Crimean Tatar and journalist at the "Crimea Solidarity" platform, as well as nine new criminal cases against local residents who refused to enrol into the military service of the Russian Federation. We repeat that the SMM, in line with its mandate which covers all of Ukraine, and international human rights actors should have full, free and unhindered access to the peninsula.
5. We deplore the continued militarisation of the Crimean peninsula, as well as further attempts to restrict freedom of navigation through Kerch strait including to and from the Sea of Azov. We are also concerned about the new legislation imposed by the de-facto authorities whereby only Russian citizens are allowed to own land in assigned "border areas" of the peninsula. This legislation and all other violations of international law have the potential to destabilise the security situation, not only in Ukraine, but also in the Black Sea and for the region as a whole.
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.

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 and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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