



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1295 Vienna, 10 December 2020

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

The European Union regrets the fact that we just concluded another Ministerial Council without an agreement on a Declaration on “OSCE efforts towards peace with respect to Ukraine”. Due to the unconstructive position of one participating State, we failed for the seventh time to unite in a common call for a sustainable political solution to the conflict in line with the OSCE principles and commitments, including the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, the support to the efforts by the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group as well as the safe and secure access of the SMM throughout the whole territory of Ukraine.

At the same time, the conflict in eastern Ukraine, caused by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces, continues and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation is further consolidated by attempts to impose Russian laws and regulations upon the local population and by increasing the militarization of the peninsula. These breaches of international law and OSCE principles have dangerous consequences and pose a severe challenge to the European security order. The European Union will continue to condemn these actions. We also welcome last week’s adoption of the UNGA resolution on the "Problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov" and call on Russia to implement all its provisions without further delay.

Mr Chairman, it is now one year since the leaders of the Normandy format met in Paris and reached common agreed conclusions on steps to advance the settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. While the adoption of the additional ceasefire measures in July represented an undeniable breakthrough and a substantial and tangible improvement of the security situation, the persisting, and recently also increasing, ceasefire violations and casualties continue to cast a shadow on this achievement. Last week, we were saddened to learn from the SMM of the first two civilian casualties due to shelling since 27 July.

We are still awaiting progress on the other provisions of these commonly agreed conclusions. The sides provisionally designated, already in July, four new disengagement areas and nineteen demining zones. They also agreed to open two additional entry-exit checkpoints in the Luhansk region on 10 November, a commitment so far only upheld by Ukraine. Ukraine has consistently demonstrated its determination to move forward on these issues. We once again call on Russia, as a signatory of these commonly agreed conclusions, and as a participant in the TCG, to reciprocate this stance in a constructive spirit.

We also wish to recall that it was agreed in Paris to work towards the mutual release of detainees based on the formula “all for all” and that the ICRC should have full access to the detainees, including in non-government-controlled areas. We welcome the previous releases of conflict-related detainees and call for further progress in this regard before the end of the year. We reiterate our call on Russia to ensure that international humanitarian organisations be granted full and unhindered access to the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine. We deplore that Russian so-called “humanitarian” convoys continue to enter Ukraine in violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as international humanitarian law, as recorded once again on 26 November by the OSCE Border Observer Mission.

The Normandy conclusions also recalled the importance of full and safe access of the SMM throughout the whole territory of Ukraine in accordance with its mandate. We therefore reiterate our call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to remove all limitations to the SMM’s work. We also regret that there was no agreement during the Ministerial Council on the draft decision on “OSCE monitoring and verification of the areas adjacent to the Ukrainian-Russian state border”, co-sponsored by 35 OSCE participating States, due to the unconstructive position of one participating State.

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 fueling 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 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.