



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council N°1083 Vienna, 17 December 2015

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#### **EU Statement on Russia's Ongoing Aggression against Ukraine and Violations of OSCE Principles and Commitments**

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The European Union remains concerned by the volatile and tense situation along the line of contact, where heavy weapons are still being used. We reiterate our call for all sides to take immediate and concrete steps to consolidate the ceasefire and move toward a sustainable political settlement in line with OSCE commitments and principles.

To this end, we reiterate our call on all sides to unconditionally and verifiably withdraw all weapons in line with the Minsk Package of Measures and the agreed Addendum. In this context, we call on all sides to provide all outstanding baseline information to the SMM in line with the verification requirements requested on 16 October. Without it, the SMM cannot effectively verify the withdrawal process.

While there have been some improvements in recent weeks, significant restrictions continue to impede the SMM's UAVs and monitors. In particular, restrictions remain prevalent in large swaths of separatist-held areas, including along the State border with Russia. These must be lifted without further delay. Full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including Crimea and separatist-controlled sections of the Ukrainian-Russian border, is crucial for the SMM to fulfil its mandate. In this context, we are concerned by the hostility directed towards the SMM by members of the so-called "DPR" on 10 December at the entrance checkpoint to the village Staromarivka. Such actions are unacceptable and must stop. We call for full cooperation to enable the SMM to establish further Forward Patrol Bases as planned.

We are concerned by recent reporting by the SMM that mines continue to be laid as well as the use of improvised explosive devices. As discussed many times in this Council, a final agreement in the Security Working Group on a framework on mine

action is urgently needed. We welcome progress achieved by the Security Working Group to identify priority areas for immediate action and urge sides to follow-up on the ground. Clearance, removal and destruction of unexploded ordnance is vital to saving lives, improving security and access for the SMM and humanitarian actors, and enabling the safe return of internally displaced people. The risk of civilian casualties is increasing as unmarked mines are increasingly covered by snow. We appreciate the working meeting on 14 December to discuss OSCE mine action and demining activities in Ukraine.

The humanitarian situation in the conflict zone remains dire, particularly in separatist-held areas. Yet in this bleak context, the UN's humanitarian programmes remain suspended in separatist-held parts of Donetsk region. The closure of protection, food, health, water, shelter and recovery programmes has had a devastating impact on an already vulnerable and suffering people. We once again call on the separatists to take all necessary measures to facilitate the access to all people in need and ensure immediate, unimpeded and sustained delivery of humanitarian aid in line with international humanitarian principles. We urge the Humanitarian Working Group to agree on concrete steps to this end without further delay. We reiterate our call for the release of all hostages and unlawfully detained persons on an 'all for all' basis, but especially those who are ill or wounded.

We again call on the sides in the Political Working Group to work towards agreement on the modalities of local elections in certain parts of Donetsk and Luhansk in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. It is important that established conditions for ODIHR observation are met, including ensuring security and access for ODIHR.

We note positively that the Trilateral Contact Group and its subordinated working groups have agreed on a concrete timetable to continue work in 2016. We once again reiterate our strong support for the work of the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group in their efforts to achieve a politically sustainable solution with full respect for OSCE principles and commitments.

The European Union remains firm in its call on all parties to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and also again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet their commitments. We recall that the duration of the EU economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements. The ceasefire must be respected. All heavy weapons must be withdrawn and foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its state border is essential. We reiterate our concern about reports regarding the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia.

Mr Chair, the European Union recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to recognise these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times, to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilise the situation and to reverse moves that contravene these principles. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and we will not recognise it.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.